

CARIB GOLD

by

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CHAPTER ONE

BUCCANEER'S CAY

IN ALL probability it was the burly negro skipper of the sponging sloop who started the story and caused all the trouble, for on the long sail from Anona to Buccaneer's Cay* Dr. Hewlett entertained his companions with tales of the pirates' treasures which according to local traditions were buried on some of the numerous islands. And the skipper, hearing a part of a story or catching some of the conversation, might well have jumped to the conclusion that the scientist and his party were on a search for buried treasure.

So they were, in a way. Not treasures of gold and silver and gems, hidden by long-dead pirates, however, but scientific treasures in the shape of remains of the pre-Columbian people who had inhabited the islands in the distant past.

It was because Buccaneer's Cay was rarely visited by any human beings, and was wholly uninhabited, and because it was fairly honeycombed with caves according to all reports, and therefore was a most promising spot whereon to discover archaeological specimens that would shed new light on the ancient unknown race, that Dr. Hewlett had selected the remote bit of land as the locale for his annual expedition.

* Cay is the Spanish word for a small island. It is pronounced Ky-ee and is the equivalent of the English word KEY which is merely a corruption of the Spanish word. For example, the Florida Keys. Key West (a corruption of Cayo Hueso), etc

Aside from the scientist there was "Jimmy" Price, christened Martha, his secretary and incidentally his niece, whose freckled face, low-pitched voice and boyish manners were so out of tune with her name that from the time she had learned to walk she had been known to every one as "Jimmy."

Then there was Tom Hinsdale, the scientist's assistant and right-hand man; big, deliberate, reminding one of a good-natured bear, and the last person in the world that any one would suspect of being an archaeologist, despite the fact that he was an acknowledged authority on the Mayas, Toltecs, Aztecs, Chibchas and other early American races.

The fourth member of the party was Joseph Tigandi, familiarly and always known as "Gandi," a Carib Indian youth whom Dr. Hewlett had annexed during a trip to Guiana, and who acted in the capacity of body-servant, camp boy, cook and man-of-all-work for the scientist, and whose instinctive ability to explain the use and purpose of puzzling artifacts had proved invaluable on many an occasion.

Finally there was Sam, a long, lanky, gangling, grinning Negro who, at the last minute, had begged Dr. Hewlett to hire him "For to work, chief," and upon being interrogated as to just what work he could do, replied so unexpectedly: "Ah speculate Ah can 'complish most anything what does necess'tate common sense, chief," that the scientist employed him then and there.

"Any man who can do that is a treasure," declared Dr. Hewlett as he told the others of the new addition to their party.

"He don't look as if he'd ever done a stroke of hard work in his life," observed Tom, who was prone to judge

men by their physical development. "But"—with a grin—"he may help to amuse us. That face, and that mouth with the yawning void where his front teeth should be are enough to make any one laugh."

It was soon apparent that whatever Sam's virtues or failings might be he was no gossip, and although lending a hand to trim sail or to steer, he regarded the sloop's captain and the one sailor as inferiors, never chatting nor hobnobbing with them, but remaining aloof, and declaring, when Tom happened to mention his attitude, "They stupid spigotty niggers, chief, and Ah'm a British subject Ah is, and Ah ain't lower me dignification to 'sociate with they specie, no, sir, chief."

Sam therefore was freed of all suspicion of having spun any highly-coloured yarns to the black skipper and his even blacker deckhand, so as I have said, and as all members of the expedition were convinced, it was probable that all the troubles were the result of the scientist's stories of treasure-trove and the vivid imagination of the chon-skinned captain.

That a most matter-of-fact scientist should have beguiled the time by telling tales of pirates and pirates' loot may seem strange. In fact, any one might reasonably assume that he and his companions, with the exception of Gandi, being scientists on a scientific expedition, would have conversed only of the glyphs, artifacts, crania, crematory urns and other objects which they hoped to disinter on Buccaneer's Cay. But Dr. Hewlett was a decidedly unusual type of scientist, for when not actively engaged in collecting, classifying and labelling his specimens and writing learned monographs on his discoveries, he cast Science to the winds and devoted himself

to his favourite hobby of romantic and historic deeds and personages of the past.

Hence, being in a locality that fairly reeked with romance, history and piratical associations, it is not strange that he and his companions should have talked of freebooters and their reputed treasures rather than of archæological matters, until Buccaneer's Cay hove in sight over the stubby bowsprit of the sloop.

It was a sizeable island, four or five miles in length by two or three miles in width, with rocky shores for the most part and with its highest point barely one hundred feet above the sea. Inland, large trees towered above the dense jungle of smaller growth along the shores.

Off the southern end of the cay was a sandy islet overgrown with coarse grass and stunted trees above the stretch of its pink beach, its eastern tip ending in a rocky point and its opposite extremity forming mud flats overgrown with mangrove trees.

Shifting his helm slightly, the sloop's skipper headed his craft for a narrow opening among the mangroves.

"The Buccaneer's Cay" Dr. Hewlett announced as the vessel slipped in between the trees and the sails came clattering down. Then, to the skipper—"Is there a spring or fresh water on the cay?"

"*Quien sabe?*" replied the Negro. "Me, myself, never lan' on dis cay."

"Hm, well, I expect there is," remarked the scientist as they loaded their dunnage into the small boat and prepared to disembark.

"Gotum plenty water," declared the Carib. "Must for haveum water where gotum balli tree. Me make findum."

"Nothing like having an aborigine with us," remarked

Tom. "Now I wouldn't have known a balli tree from any other bally trees. But it would seem that they indicate the presence of water. I hope Gandi locates the reservoir near a good camp site."

"I hope it's at the other end of the island and that Uncle makes you our water-boy," grinned Jimmy. "You need exercise, Tom, and you'll never take it unless you're forced to or you get so interested in digging that you forget it's really work. And after you have toted water you'd be too tired to make such atrocious puns."

Tom chuckled. "Did you ever see a cat take exercise?" he asked her. "Yet cats are always in condition."

A moment later the boat grated on the sandy bank beyond the area of the mangroves and Sam sprang for the shore.

"Me go findum water," observed the Carib as the others commenced discharging the boat's cargo of boxes, bales and camping equipment. By the time the last of the load was safe on shore the Indian returned.

"Me findum," he announced tersely. "Plenty good water."

"Fine!" commented the scientist. "No need to worry on that score."

"How far away?" Tom wanted to know. "I hope it isn't on the other side of the cay."

"Not too far," Gandi told him. "Mebbe must cutum road. Bush plenty bad."

"Break open the case with the machetes, Tom," said Dr. Hewlett. Then, as he distributed the implements, "I suppose you can use a machete, Sam."

"Yaas indeed, chief," the Negro assured him. "Where about you wish the road cut, chief?"

"Mebbe cutum this side," Gandi told him, slashing at a clump of thorny acacia bushes.

Sam stepped forward and with a seemingly effortless swing felled a two-inch tree at a single blow.

"Whew!" ejaculated Jimmy. "That boy sure swings a wicked machete. Why, he walks into that jungle like a circus rider through a paper-covered hoop."

With the Carib leading the way and with Sam slashing to right and left, and with Tom and Dr. Hewlett doing their part by trimming and clearing the roughly-cut trail, they proceeded rapidly inland, until the jungle growth near the shore gave way to more open forest. Skirting a low hill, Gandi guided the party to an outcropping limestone ridge where a trickling stream issued from the dark entrance of a cavern.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the scientist. "A fine camp site, water, and a cliff riddled with caves if I am not mistaken. I shouldn't be surprised if the caverns contain an abundance of remains. In all probability the aborigines had their village here."

With the help of the sloop's skipper and his sailor the dunnage was soon moved to the selected camp site. Then, having been paid for their services and instructed to return to the cay in a month, the two men sailed away, leaving Dr. Hewlett and his four companions alone upon the forsaken bit of land.

They had plenty to keep them busy and to occupy their minds, and they worked steadily, setting up their tents, clearing an open space about the camp, erecting a wood stove, unpacking implements, tools and provisions, until as the sun sank low in the western sky the camp was ready for the night.

CHAPTER TWO

A MATTER OF COMMON SENSE

"I WONDER if there's any game here," Tom remarked when the essential work was completed and he assembled his double-barrelled shotgun, which was the only firearm the party possessed, other than the antiquated, muzzle-loading fusee that the Carib carried wherever he went, despite the "ragging," of the others.

"Ask Gandi, he knows," Jimmy suggested. "But I'd say no. If there were any wild beasts here he'd be out stalking them with his old gas pipe."

"Huh, him plenty good gun," declared the Indian, who was busy with preparations for dinner. "Him killum plenty."

"Sure, he'll 'killum' if you poke the muzzle against a beast," laughed Tom. "Just the same I'd about as soon be the one shot at as the one doing the shooting. But how about it, Gandi, any game here?"

"Huh, mebbe 'gouti, mebbe pigeon," replied the Indian. "How me sabby? Me no huntum this time. Me findum water. Me makeum cooky fillum you belly. No have time for look see if gotum game."

Sam chuckled audibly and Dr. Hewlett laughed. "That should hold you for a time, Tom," he said. "No use trying to get a rise out of Gandi."

Tom grinned good-naturedly and dropping some cartridges into his pockets rose. "Guess I'll take a stroll and see if there is anything worth shooting," he announced.

"Better take Sam along to help you bring back the game," suggested the girl teasingly.

"No thanks," Tom told her. "Most likely he'd fall down and break his neck and I'd have to carry him back." Climbing the hill, Tom vanished among the trees.

Presently Gandhi turned to Sam. "You sabby cook?" he demanded. "Sabby cookum ham? Sabby cookum rice, cookum plantain?"

"Wa la, me boy. Ah'm a real cook, Ah is," declared the Negro. "Ah been contemplatin' you efforts and Ah been considerin' howcome you imagine you'self is a cook. Ili yi, Ca'ib, you's just a assistance to a cook. It necessitate common sense for to cook, boy. Just you scootle away on whatsoever business you mind's on and Ah'll spandulate what real cookin' is."

"Ha ha! So we have a chef and didn't know it!" cried Jimmy.

"I can offer a better opinion after I've sampled Sam's culinary efforts," said the scientist. "What is it, Gandhi?"

"Please, sir, me like go huntum game same way," replied the Carib.

"Yes, yes, if you want to go hunting, go ahead," Dr. Hewlett told him. "I expect Sam's common or uncommon sense will enable him to fry plantains and ham, boil rice and make coffee."

Rummaging among his personal belongings, Gandhi produced his ancient, single-barrelled gun, a flask of powder and a pouch of shot, and commenced loading the inefficient-looking weapon.

"Wa la!" exclaimed Sam as he gazed at the gun. "What you insinuate, callin' that a gun? That a fizz-boom-bam, that what he are."

"And what, may I ask, is a 'fizz-boom-bam'?" Jimmy asked him.

Sam grinned and rubbed his chin. "Well, mistress, Ah 'spect he rightly is a specie of gun. But he a gun what don't make to go 'Bang!' when he trigger pulled, but go 'Fizz-boom-bam!' like Ah says. Yaas, mistress, that what he does. Ah see he plenty of times when Ah in the bush. Seems like the Buck boys (Indians) 'preciate that specie of gun. But Buck boys don't make no hum-buggin' with game, mistress. But it surely and for true need common sense for to kill whatsoever with a fizz-boom-bam, and that the truth, mistress."

Presently the sound of a gunshot came to them from the woods in the direction that Tom had taken.

"That sounds as if Tom had found game," observed Jimmy.

A few moments later there was a second report, and Sam chuckled. "Seems like we bound for have fresh meat," he said. "But it too late for to intercept the cookin' of the ham now."

As he finished speaking there was a faint and feeble report from the opposite direction, sounding, as Dr. Hewlett remarked, "Like a firecracker gone wrong."

"That's Gandhi's 'fizz-boom-bam,'" laughed Jimmy. "I wonder what he fired at."

Dr. Hewlett laughed. "Judging from the sound of Gandhi's weapon I should suspect he might have shot a hummingbird. But judging from past experience I shouldn't be surprised if he'd killed an elephant if pachyderms were to be found on the cay." Then, to Sam—"You appear to be rather familiar with the Buck boys' ways, Sam."

"Yaas, sir, chief," the Negro assured him. "Ah been

roamin', chief. Ah borned and growed up in Demerara, and there plenty bush and plenty Bucks' in Demarara for true. Yaas, sir, chief, and Ah 'passed plenty time in Panama, too, and in Peru, and Ah meet Bucks hereabout and thereabout, and Ah reach the assumption that a Buck is a Buck wheresoever or howsomêver he dwells or whatsoever tribe he is, and that the truth."

"Goodness, I didn't realise we had such a travelled Man Friday," Jimmy told him.

"Hallo, here's Tom," exclaimed Dr. Hewlett as Hinsdale appeared. "What luck, Tom?"

"Just a couple of pigeons," the other replied tossing down the birds he had shot. "Didn't I hear someone fire a gun? Wonder who's on the cay besides ourselves."

"No, you didn't hear a gun," said Jimmy. "You merely heard a 'fizz-boom-bam.' Gandi went hunting also."

"Well, if he gets one of those pigeons with his old gas pipe he's a wonder," Tom declared. "They're as wild as hawks."

"We'll soon know," said the scientist. "If I'm not mistaken he's coming now. Funny he should make such a noise. He usually goes and comes like a ghost."

"There he is!" cried Jimmy. "Golly, what— Why, he's carrying some big—"

"A pig!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "I said I shouldn't be surprised if he killed an elephant, and I suppose a wild boar is the nearest thing to it on this island."

The Carib slipped the heavy burden from his shoulders and flexed his arms in relief. "Mebbe me no gotum gun, gotum fizz-boom-bam," he remarked. "All same me killum this feller pig. How you likeum?"

"Looks as if the joke is on me," laughed Tom. "If you can shoot a hog of that size with what you call a

gun, may the Lord have pity on the wild life if you ever do get a good gun in your hands, Gandi."

"But I didn't know there were wild boars here," said the girl. "What an ugly-looking beast he is! I'd hate to have one go for me with those big tusks."

"It seems a shame to have to waste so much good meat," mused Tom. "But we couldn't eat that beast in a month."

"We don't make to waste he, chief," declared Sam. "No sir. Soon's ever Ah done complete you dinner Ah'll make to babricot that gentleman for true, yaas, sir. And when he babricot he bound to last fresh as long as is. chief."

"What on earth is 'babricot'?" Tom inquired.

"A method of curing meat by smoking it," the scientist explained. "It's universally employed by the Indians of South America. But come on, dinner's served. You'll have a chance to see Sam demonstrate the process later."

"It appears that our Man Friday is a real graduate chef," Jimmy informed Tom as they seated themselves at the camp table. "And a much travelled man also," she added. "I fear Gandi's cooking days may be temporarily at an end."

"Guess you're right," mumbled Tom. "Maybe hunger's a good sauce, as the old saying has it, but it seems to me this food has a flavour Gandi never managed to impart to his cooking. And, curried rice! How did you know I liked curry, Sam?"

"That just a matter of common sense, chief," the Negro replied. "Most gentlemens of portly constructions and complected in the manner of yourself does like curry for true, chief."

"Will wonders never cease!" laughed Dr. Hewlett.

"Not only is Sam a wonderfully good cook, as this meal proves, and a real tropical tramp, but in addition he is a keen and observant student of human nature."

"First time any one ever dared tell me I'm portly," grinned Tom.

The meal over, Sam began his preparations for barbecoting the hog which he and Gandi had dressed at some distance from the camp, and Tom, who had never witnessed the process, watched with interest. Cutting a number of green branches the Carib and Sam erected a grid-like platform about eighteen inches above the earth. Raking the coals from the dying camp fire they placed them beneath the grid and, throwing on carefully-selected twigs and leaves soon had a hot, smoky fire going. Placing the quarters of the boar on the grid, Sam watched them while Gandi ate. Then, turning the meat over, he left Carib to attend to it while he dined. By this time the fire had died down, and leaving the pork to take care of itself, the two men busied themselves washing and cleaning up.

"Is that all there is to it?" Tom asked as the two men removed the meat from the grid.

"There's a lot more to it than you see," Dr. Hewlett told him. "The secret of good barbecoting lies in selecting the right kind of wood and leaves to cure and smoke the meat without imparting a taste of creosote and without scorching the meat. Notice the colour of that pork. It's a clear bright red, not brown or black, and yet if you cut into it you'll find it white, tender and juicy, and it will remain that way indefinitely."

"Wasn't that the way the buccaners cured meat which gave them their name?" Jimmy wanted to know.

"No," her uncle told her, "the dried beef or 'bucan'

was quite different, being merely strips of beef dried in the sun or over fires, hard, tough and leathery stuff."

Tom laughed. "I guess eating that is what made the buccaneers so tough and leathery," he said.

"In that case you should wake up to-morrow morning with slant eyes and a yellow skin—after eating so much curry," Jimmy told him.

Tom yawned. "Don't care if I wake up a Chink or a Hindu," he declared. "The curry was bully good, and anyhow, in order to wake up a fellow has to go to sleep. I'm turning in."

CHAPTER THREE.

JIMMY MAKES SOME DISCOVERIES

SAM, BANGING on a tin pan and shouting "fireside," aroused every one the next morning.

Tom, rubbing his eyes, glanced about, blinking. "Whew, it doesn't seem as if I'd been asleep ten minutes," he declared.

"I guess Sam's alarm clock must be fast," said Jimmy as she yawned and stretched. "It isn't even daylight yet."

"Fine!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "Early to bed and early to rise, you know. Where's Gandi?"

"He gone take a walk to the shore for to have a swim, chief," Sam replied. "Ah taken mine aforetime, chief."

"You *are* an early bird!" laughed Jimmy. "Why, Sam, you must have gone for your swim while it was yet dark."

"Yaas, miss," grinned the Negro, "but Ah's so dark meself it don't matter. Ah was considerin' that maybe you'd 'preciate a swim afore absorbinate of your brekfus, so Ah arouse you in plenty time, miss."

"Say, that's a good idea," declared Tom. "I'll bet a plunge in salt water would take the sleep from one's eyes."

"I'm with you," cried the girl. "Come on, Doctor, snap into a bathing suit and we'll all try Sam's appetiser."

Refreshed and thoroughly wide awake the party sat down to their first morning's meal on the cay.

"I think our best plan is to separate and each explore a cave," said the scientist. "That will save time, and any one who finds traces of former human occupants of a cavern will summon the others."

"Suppose we all find traces?" Jimmy asked.

"Not likely to," Tom told her. "These cays weren't densely inhabited, and the aborigines were sociably inclined. Probably all lived together like a happy family in one cave. All ready? Let's get started then."

Armed with machetes and electric torches the party set out, each selecting one of the numerous caverns in the hill. For a time the earth swallowed them up and no sounds issued from the caves. Then a shout from Tom brought the others hurrying to his cave. "Guess this is the prehistoric apartment house," he announced, as he led the way into the big limestone cavern. "See here." He pointed to the smoke-blackened rocky roof and walls, and swinging the beam of his torch, showed the others a high pile of broken shells at one side of the cave.

"Hmm, not a doubt of it," agreed Dr. Hewlett. "And plenty of debris in which to dig. Gandi, bring along the picks and shovels."

A few moments later the three men were shovelling aside the accumulated bits of broken rock that had fallen from the roof, the dust of ages, and the other loose material that covered the floor of the cave.

Suddenly Tom dropped to his knees, began scraping aside the finer debris with his hands, and uncovered a wooden paddle.

"Fine!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett as he examined it. "It is very nearly perfect. I think we——" His sentence was interrupted by a shout from the girl who had been searching about in the farther recesses of the cave.

"See what I've found!" she cried. "Here's their living-room—in here. You're out in the kitchen, I guess."

Dropping their tools, the others hurried to her to find her holding a carved wooden stool. "I found it on a ledge of the rock," she told them. "And look over here. Aren't those carvings on the wall?"

Quite excited over the new discoveries the men commenced a thorough exploration of the cave, and finally began digging in a recess which Jimmy laughingly declared must have been the Indians' china closet, judging by the number of fragments of pottery scattered about. As the air became filled with fine impalpable dust from the men's labours, the girl left the scent of activities and, wandering about the cave, discovered a narrow fissure in one of the rocky walls. The light from her electric torch flashing into the dark opening revealed a cleft leading to a second cavern, and squeezing through the aperture, she found herself in a cave even larger than the one she had just left.

Above her head countless stalactites gleamed and glistened with prismatic colours in the light of her torch. Great stalagmites rose from the floor, and in many places the two joined to form great stone columns and pillars reaching from floor to roof, while in other spots huge masses of the "dripstone" spread in fan-shaped slopes like cataracts transformed to solid rock. Some of the formations were spotless white, others were tinted with pale rose, yellow, brown or deep red, and, fascinated by the beauty and the weirdness of the formations, Jimmy wandered about flashing her light here and there and exclaiming in delight. There were no signs of the cave ever having been occupied and at last the girl turned to retrace her steps and rejoin the men in the outer

cavern. Then, as she glanced about looking for the cleft through which she had entered, she uttered a half-suppressed exclamation of surprise and felt a sudden fear as she realised that she hadn't the least idea of where the entrance was. But it was only a momentary sensation, and, confident that she could easily find the fissure, she began searching the cavern walls. This, however, was not so easy or so simple as it might seem, for the columns of limestone, the stalactites hanging from the ceiling and the stalagmites rising from the uneven rock floor of the cave prevented her from following the walls without making numerous detours and retracing her steps to peer into the shadows behind the masses of rock. Still she was not really alarmed, for the cave was not very large and she felt confident that if necessary she could attract the attention of the men in the outer cavern by shouting. But she was determined she would not do this unless she failed utterly to locate the elusive cleft, for she knew that if she did she would be in for a fearful "ragging" from Tom for having lost herself in a small cave. But where was that opening? she wondered. She had searched every yard of the walls on two sides of the cavern without finding an opening of any sort large enough for the passage of a cat and she was almost on the point of giving up and shouting when, rounding a big column of dripstone, she came unexpectedly upon a wide fissure. Almost instantly, however, she realised that it was not the cleft through which she had entered. It was much wider, and peering into the opening she was surprised to see that instead of being dark and shadowy, the tunnel-like passage was quite brightly illuminated by light from some invisible source concealed by a turn of the cleft. "It must be another entrance leading to the outside of

the hill," she thought to herself, as snapping off her electric torch, which was no longer needed, she stepped into the passage and hurried forward. But as she rounded the bend and came in sight of the outer entrance she halted, gazing in surprise at the scene before her, for the stretch of landscape framed by the mouth of the tunnel was unlike anything she had seen on the island.

In the distance stretched the shimmering blue sea shot with patches and streaks of turquoise and lilac over sand bars and coral reefs, and breaking in lazy wavelets of white upon a beach of pink coral sand. Above the beach, coconut palms swayed in the breeze.

For a space Jimmy stood drinking in the beauty of the scene and quite thrilled at having made such an unexpected discovery on the little cay.

"Won't the others be surprised when I tell them about this!" she thought. "And what a lovely spot for our camp. I'll make them move over here right away. There must be fresh water where there's so much grass, and what a perfect bathing beach, and coconuts!"

Anxious to explore the newly discovered portion of the island Jimmy hurried down the slope and through the knee-high Bahama grass towards the beach. The meadow was only a few hundred yards in width and she had covered half the distance when she was startled by a terrifying bellow from somewhere near at hand. Forgetting for the moment that there were no large wild animals on the islands, Jimmy turned frightened eyes in the direction of the sound, half expecting to see a huge savage beast of some sort. And sure enough, the beasts were there: big dun-coloured creatures staring at her from where they had appeared from behind a clump of low palmettoes. "Why, they're only cows!" she

exclaimed with a laugh at her own momentary fright. "But I didn't know——" Her mental sentence was never finished, for at that instant one of the "cows" lowered its head, and with another loud and unmistakable angry bellow charged straight for her. And following on the heels of the enraged bull came the rest of the herd. For an instant Jimmy felt paralysed with terror, and utterly unable to move. Then with a shrill scream she turned and raced for dear life towards the entrance to the cave.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAM EARNS A TITLE

IT WAS fortunate for Jimmy that the entrance to the cave was not farther away, for as it was the charging cattle were far too close for comfort, and she expected to feel herself tossed in the air by their horns or trampled under their hoofs as she raced panting and filled with terror up the hill. And as with a last mad dash she reached the narrow opening in the rocks and threw herself within, the big bull's wicked horns were not a yard behind her.

"Whew!" she panted as she dropped exhausted in the security of the cleft and strove to regain her breath. "That was close!" Then, with a shudder at the mere thought—"Golly, supposing I had stumbled!"

Returning to the cave, she resumed her interrupted search for the passage to the outer cavern which she soon discovered.

"Well, where have you been?" demanded Dr. Hewlett as the men glanced up from their labours at her approach. "One moment you were here helping us and the next instant you had vanished."

"I've been having adventures," declared the girl. "I found another cave and——"

"Don't tell us you found more remains," Tom interrupted. "We've enough material right here to keep us busy for a month."

"No, no more remains," Jimmy replied, "but the

loveliest place—with a beautiful beach and green grass and coconuts. Just think how nice a cool green coconut would taste after all this dust in your throats. I——”

“What on earth are you talking about?” the scientist wanted to know. “First another cave and then beaches and coconuts. Do be lucid, Jimmy.”

“Oh, she’s just wandering in her mind,” chuckled Tom.

“Is that so?” retorted the girl. “If you don’t believe me, come and see—and I almost hope you get chased by a bull, too!”

“Good Lord, the child’s getting worse and worse!” exclaimed Tom. “Now she has a bull in the other cave. Next thing it will be filled with diamonds like Aladdin’s cave.”

“Don’t be silly!” cried Jimmy. “I didn’t say there was a bull in the cave or a beach and coconuts there either. If you’ll only be quiet and listen instead of interrupting, I may be able to explain.”

“Very well, we’re all ears,” Tom assured her; “now, fire away and let’s have the yarn.”

“And you think that would be a fine place for our camp, do you?” chuckled Dr. Hewlett, when Jimmy had told them of her experiences. “Personally I prefer to forgo the beach and coconuts rather than have such inhospitable neighbours.”

“Me, too,” said Tom. “I never did like playful cattle. But what gets me is what those beasts are doing here, if the cay is uninhabited.”

“The answer is the same as for the pigs,” the scientist told him. “Wild descendants of cattle placed on the island years ago. Perhaps by the buccaneers to insure a supply of fresh meat when they required it.”

“Thoughtful old pirates,” commented Tom. “And a

nice pot roast or a porterhouse steak would go mighty well. Wonder if I could kill a steer with a shotgun?"

"Maybe Gandi could—with 'his fizz-boom-bam," laughed Jimmy. "He seems to bring home the bacon, so perhaps he can bring home the beef. We'll let you supply the feathered game, Tom."

"That's what you think," he snorted. "Just wait until I go after them. You won't see me running away from any 'cow.'"

"Don't forget the old adage—'he who fights and runs away,' you know," the scientist reminded him. "But seriously, if these cattle are like those I have met on other uninhabited islands you'll be wise to leave them alone, for they're a savage ugly lot, and unless you had a high-powered rifle you wouldn't have a chance of killing one of them. Besides," he added, "we're here to collect archæological specimens and not to hunt wild cattle. And as for you, Jimmy, don't go on any more exploring trips alone. These caves are often labyrinths of passages and you might easily become hopelessly lost or you might fall into some hidden cleft or hole."

"And we can't afford to waste time hunting for you," grinned Tom. Then, "Isn't that Sam's tin pan dinner gong I hear? Gosh, I feel as if I hadn't had a square meal in a week."

Although Dr. Hewlett was a most ardent scientist and tireless in the pursuit of his archæological researches, he was no slave driver and believed thoroughly in tempering work with play. So, the meal over, he suggested that they call it a day as far as excavating was concerned and that while he assorted and labelled the specimens secured by the morning's work, the others could amuse themselves as they chose.

"You forget that I'm your secretary," Jimmy reminded him. "I haven't done any hard work and it's my job to catalogue the specimens. But Tom's been working like a grave-digger and deserves a rest. Now, I've always heard that fishing is about the most restful thing a man can do, so why not go fishing, Tom?"

"That's got more common sense in it than anything you've said in a long time," Tom told her. "There should be plenty of fish here. How about it, Sam?" he asked, turning to the Negro.

"Ah 'spects there's plenty fish to be cotched, chief," Sam replied.

"Where's the best place and what bait do you use here?" Tom asked him.

"You boun' for cotch mostest fish where it make rocky bottom," the cook declared. "Ah don't rightly know what specie of fish you boun' for find herabout, but Ah 'spects they all agoin' to demonstrate they fondness for crab. You'll find plenty of land crabs runnin' about, chief."

"Better take your gun," Jimmy called after him. "You might see a flying-fish, you know."

As Sam had said there were plenty of land crabs and "soldier crabs" or land hermit crabs on the cay, and Tom soon had a supply of the crustaceans for bait. It was a new experience to be able to watch the fish as they gathered about the tempting bait, until one big fellow made a rush and seized it. "Well, this is something like fishing," was Tom's mental comment as he freed the hook from his captive's jaw, and admired the creature's gorgeous colours. But when another and another fish had been landed and each was different and all gleamed with brilliant hues, Tom became more interested in the

strange colours and forms of the fish that in capturing them, and having secured enough for a meal he spent his time watching the finny inhabitants among the sea growths at the base of the miniature cliff.

"Well, look who's here!" cried Jimmy as Tom appeared carrying his string of fish. "And see what he's brought. Do you call those fish, Tom? You didn't make a mistake and pick flowers instead of going fishing, did you?" Then, dropping her banter, "Aren't they lovely things! If appearances have anything to do with it they should be most delicious. But what sort of fish are they?"

"Search me," replied Tom. "Can you tell us, Doctor?"

"Hmm, I recognise a few," the scientist said. "This"—indicating an olive-green fish spotted with scarlet—"is a rock hind. Here's a striped grunt, and there are angel fishes and parrot fishes among them. But, I'm no ichthyologist. Maybe Sam can identify them."

"I think they're simply delightful, those names, I mean," declared the girl. "Now what is the name of this queer fish, Sam?"

"He's a trigger-fish, mistress," Sam told her.

"What a strange name," exclaimed Jimmy. "Why do you call him that?"

"The appellation distinguishes him for the fact he possess a trigger," Sam informed her. "Look it here, miss. When he see he goin' have trouble or some shark come hum-buggin' about, he sticks up the spine like so and lock it with the trigger like so."

"Gracious, what a lot you know, Sam!" the girl exclaimed. "We all thought you were so dumb at first and now we refer to you as if you were a living encyclopædia."

"Yes, you rascal, you had us all fooled!" laughed Tom. "What's the idea, pretending to be stupid?"

Sam grinned and chuckled gleefully. "Beggin' your pardon, chief, Ah don't make pretend Ah a stupid nigger. But Ah long time absorbinate the fact that a foolish puppy makes the most loudest kiwowin'."

"Bully for you, Sam!" cried the scientist. "You're a philosopher, a student of human nature and a sage as well as a splendid chef and something of an ichthyologist in addition."

Sam scratched his woolly head and looked puzzled. "Ah 'spect you speak the truth, chief," he said. "But Ah don't rightly absorbinate the signification of nick-the-old-chest, chief."

The scientist managed to keep a sober face, but the others laughed heartily. "That's a word meaning a person who knows all about fishes," Dr. Hewlett explained.

The Negro looked relieved and chuckled. "Ah bound for acquire that word, chief," he declared. "Yaas, sir, it never too late to learn one thing and another good or bad. Would you please for to say it again, chief, so's Ah can fixulate it in me mind?"

As the scientist repeated the word, speaking it slowly and distinctly, Sam listened attentively, his lips moving silently as he did so. "Do you think you can remember it now?" Dr. Hewlett asked him.

"Yaas, sir, Ah, bound have it fixulate for true, chief," Sam assured him. Picking up the fish, he turned towards the improvised kitchen. "Hi, Ca'ib!" he greeted Gandi, "Ah got title for true now. Yaas, my boy, the chief bestow me it. Ah ain't be called cook no more, Ah ic-ichthologist, and that what you bound for address me as

henceforward and hereafter. Yaas, sir, just like the chief is 'Doctor' so Ah a ic-icthologist."

As Sam spoke, the Indian stared at him fixedly with half closed, expressionless eyes. "Huh!" he grunted when the Negro finished. "Me no sabby. No speakum like so. Mebbe you crazy, me no sabby. Me sabby you feller all same cook."

"Poor Sam!" exclaimed Jimmy, "that must have been an awful let down." Then addressing the Negro, who was muttering to himself as he wielded his fish knife savagely, "Never mind, Sam," she told him, "we'll try to remember and use your new title."

"Too long," objected Tom. "We'll shorten it to 'Ikky.' How does that suit you, 'Sam'?"

The Negro glanced up, his black face once more wearing its habitual grin. "That quite a bit of all right, chief," he replied. "And it less discomodious for true, yes. Ah 'spect it like refrerrin' to the doctor as 'Doc' like you does, chief."

CHAPTER FIVE

TOM'S PREDICAMENT

THE SUCCEEDING days were busy ones for the party on Buccaneer's Cay, and the work of excavating the cave proceeded steadily. It had proved a rich field, and scores of specimens were daily added to the collection. Although the hard labour of digging ceased at noon, there was always plenty to be done. There were specimens to be carefully cleaned, labelled and packed, while Jimmy was kept busy cataloguing them and writing page after page of notes and descriptions dictated by Dr. Hewlett and Tom. As Gandi had no part in this technical work, although doing his share of digging, he spent most of his afternoons hunting and rarely failed to bring in enough game to keep the camp well supplied with fresh meat. But when Tom remarked that a diet of pigeon and pig varied by pig and pigeon was becoming a little monotonous, and that beef would be a welcome change, and asked the Carib why he didn't try hunting the wild cattle, the Indian replied. "Him feller plenty too big for shootum like me. Me sabby no can do. Me seeum. Mebbe if one, two feller cow me make for shootum same way. But him feller plenty too many."

"Don't know as I blame you, considering that crazy gun of yours," Tom told him. "But first chance I get I'm going after fresh beef."

"A real beefalo Bill!" laughed Jimmy. "No, your name isn't Bill so that won't do. It will have to be Tom the toreador."

Tom grinned. "Have your fun," he said. "But I'll bet you won't see me turning tail and running from any scrub cattle."

"Even the best bull fighters know enough to run sometimes," the girl reminded him. "Anyhow, I'll be on hand to watch you when you enter the ring. I'll stand at the entrance to the cave and see the whole show."

Dr. Hewlett, who had been busy with his collections and apparently had paid no attention to what was going on, glanced up from his work as Tom took his gun from its case and dropped some loaded shells into his pocket. "I think a little relaxation might be advisable for me also," he observed, a humorous twinkle in his eyes. "I believe I will accompany Jimmy and become an interested onlooker at the slaughter."

"That's O.K. with me," declared Tom. "I suppose the easiest way to get to the herd is by way of the caves."

"Why, where's Gandi?" exclaimed the girl as the three turned towards the entrance to the cavern. "I thought he'd come along to help carry back the kill."

"Ah 'spect he gone for cotech duck, mistress," Sam told her. "He says how there a flock of duck 'mongst the mangroves. Ah see him make off wif he gun whilst you and Master Tom was a-talkin', miss."

No cattle were visible when they reached the entrance to the second cave and gazed across the little hidden valley. But the girl reminded her companions that none had been in sight when she had first discovered the spot but had only appeared when she had started towards the beach. Tom loaded his gun with buckshot and started off, skirting the edge of the jungle towards the clump of palmetto scrub where Jimmy had first seen the beasts.

From their vantage point on the hillside the girl and

the scientist could watch his progress quite plainly although he kept to the cover.

"I hope he doesn't get hurt," Jimmy remarked as Tom neared the spot where he expected to find the cattle.

"No danger of that," Dr. Hewlett assured her. "At sound of a gunshot those cattle will doubtless be frightened half out of their wits and will stampede in the opposite direction. But it is quite likely he won't even find the herd. They may not remain here all the time. I——"

"Oh, there they are!" cried the girl excitedly. "I can see that same bull who chased me standing back of that tallest palmetto. I wonder if Tom sees them."

"Obviously he does," replied the scientist. "He's crouching and working his way along that little gully with the fringe of higher grass and weeds."

Watching intently, the two saw Tom approach the cattle. Some were lying down, contentedly chewing their cuds, others were grazing, while the old bull kept guard, apparently oblivious of an enemy so near. A short distance from the bull two well-grown calves were playfully butting each other and were almost within gunshot of Tom crouching in the grass.

"If he shoots at them he'll have a mad cow father instead of a mother after him," remarked the scientist. "But as I said, the chances are that at sound of a shot the——" His words were interrupted by the flash and report of Tom's gun and one of the calves leaped in the air and fell back kicking feebly. Instantly every member of the herd was on its feet, but instead of stampeding, as Dr. Hewlett had predicted, they stood, twitching their tails, pawing the ground, snorting and apparently at a loss to locate the source of the unwonted attack. It was then that Tom did a very foolish thing. The calf had not

been killed outright and was still kicking/ and to put an end to its sufferings Tom fired the second barrel of his gun at the wounded creature. Instantly, with a deep bellow the bull charged, followed by the entire herd. Jimmy screamed. "Oh, he'll be killed!" she cried, clutching Dr. Hewlett's arm. "He can't possibly get out of their way!"

It certainly did look bad for Tom. Like the scientist, he had expected the cattle to be frightened and flee at the sound of a gun, and he was wholly unprepared for their attack. There was no time even to reload his gun and he realised that to do so and fire at the onrushing maddened cattle would not help matters in the least. "There was only one thing to be done—race for the shelter of the nearest trees, and forgetting all about his boast to Jimmy he threw down his gun and ran as he had never run before.

"But the grass was long and tangled, he had fully fifty yards to go, and the galloping, charging bull leading the herd was barely a dozen yards behind him.

"By Jove, he'll never make it!" cried the scientist excitedly. "Good heavens, how I wish——"

"He'll be killed! Oh! Oh! Oh!" shrieked Jimmy, almost hysterical with terror at Tom's predicament. "It's terrible! Oh——!" Her voice ended in a sobbing cry and she sank back weak and faint as the bull overtook the fleeing man and with a sudden toss of his head threw Tom hurtling through the air.

But Tom wasn't killed. The wicked horns were wide-spread and merely ripped Tom's garments, and it was the bull's forehead that tossed the man into the air as the charging animal threw up its head. The blow saved Tom's life for, hurtled head over heels as if thrown from

a catapult, he crashed through the foliage of a low tree and landed among the branches.

"He's not killed!" cried Dr. Hewlett jubilantly. "I can see him moving." Then, as Tom's lusty shouts came plainly to the watchers' ears, "In fact, I don't believe he is even seriously harmed," the scientist continued. "His language certainly is not exactly what one might expect from a badly-wounded person, and his lungs are obviously in good shape."

"But, but he can't get down with those beasts there, and we can't help him," cried the girl. "And he must be hurt."

Had Tom been questioned on that score he assuredly would have replied in the affirmative in no uncertain terms, for the tree which had saved him from the enraged bull was a mimosa fairly bristling with needle-pointed thorns. Scratched, torn and bleeding, he was literally pinned to his perch by the spike-like thorns caught in his clothing and it was impossible for him to move without pricking himself still worse. And there below him was the maddened bull and his companions, snorting, pawing the earth, and waiting for their victim to come tumbling down within reach of their horns. There was nothing for him to do but shout for help and vent his anger and feelings by cursing the cattle in terms which, as Dr. Hewlett had stated, were far from being those to be expected of a seriously-injured person.

Yet despite the excruciating pain of the thorns and his yells for help, Tom realised that Jimmy and Dr. Hewlett were as unable to help him as he was to help himself. For any one to attempt to rescue him would be suicidal as long as the cattle were there on watch, and Tom had had most convincing proof that they were not

to be stampeded by a gunshot, even if there had been a gun available. As far as he could see he was doomed to remain there, suspended by thorns and surrounded by a barrier more efficient than any barbed wire, until the cattle withdrew or his clothes gave way under his weight.

Meanwhile the two at the entrance to the cave were equally at a loss as to what was to be done. In fact, matters appeared to be at a deadlock with the cattle in complete control of the situation, when, rising above Tom's frenzied shouts, a blood-curdling, terrifying scream caused Jimmy to turn wide-eyed to the scientist. "Wha-what was that?" she exclaimed in awed tones.

"Frankly, I don't know," he replied. "It sounded precisely like the hunting cry of a jaguar."

"But—but you said there were no dangerous animals on the cay," cried the girl. "And——"

Once again the strange, quavering, wailing, scream came to their ears.

"By Jove, it *must* be a jaguar!" declared the scientist. "But how the beast——"

"Hurrah, it's frightened the cattle!" cried the girl excitedly. "They're running away."

There was no doubt of it. Half the herd was already galloping off at top speed, and when, for the third time, the hair-raising cry of the big spotted cat came quavering through the air, the big bull and the remainder of his followers took to their heels, and a moment later vanished beyond the fringe of trees above the beach at the upper end of the valley.

"Stay here and I'll go after Tom," Dr. Hewlett commanded as the last of the cattle disappeared. "They're frightened now, but they may return at any moment. We two men might make it but you couldn't. I'll——"

What the scientist planned to do was never known, for at this moment there was a movement among the foliage of the jungle on the hillside, evidently caused by some large creature hurrying towards the open meadow. But instead of the fawny spotted jaguar which Jimmy and Dr. Hewlett had expected to see, a human figure stepped into view.

"Why, it's Gandi!" exclaimed the girl.

"By Jove, yes, that explains it, ejaculated the scientist. "I should have known."

"But I don't understand," Jimmy protested. "What does he explain? What——" But Dr. Hewlett was racing down the hillside towards the spot where Tom was still suspended in the thorn tree, and towards which Carib was also hurrying.

Disregarding Dr. Hewlett's injunction to remain where she was, the girl dashed after him. The Indian reached the scene of recent conflict before the others had covered half the distance from the cave, and when they arrived he was half-way up the mimosa tree, slashing a way through the branches and cutting off the thorns with his machete as he proceeded.

Reaching Tom, the Carib quickly eliminated the thorns in the vicinity and the two descended safely to the ground.

Jimmy burst into laughter as Tom appeared in full view. "Oh, I know you're hurt and I'm really terribly sorry for you, Tom," she told him. "But you look so excruciatingly funny that I can't help laughing. Why you look exactly as if you'd been blown up by an explosion—there's hardly a stitch of your clothes that isn't rags."

Tom grinned ruefully. "I don't only look as if I'd been blown up by an explosion, but believe me, I felt as if a ton of dynamite had gone off under me when that

confounded beast made connections with my rear end. But what the deuce was that beast screaming that scared the cattle away? I could have sworn it was 'a jaguar.'

"Ask Gandi, he knows," suggested the scientist.

The Indian grinned. "Me makeum noise all same likeum tiger," he informed them. "Him feller cow plenty 'fraid tiger. Sabby him all time like so."

"Hmm, well, I guess I owe you a lot for playing jaguar," said Tom, "but what I'd like to know is how come you happened to be on hand to scare the brutes off with your tiger-screaming stunt."

For a space Gandi looked puzzled, as if striving mentally to interpret Tom's words. Then, having digested their meaning, his face brightened.

"Huh, me makeum walk in bush," he said. "Me hearum chief say he makeum shootum cow same way. Me sabby mad cow mudder mebbe no likeum killum cow pickny, mebbe chief findum plenty trouble. Me watchum. Secum all time. No can shootum more cow, no can go catchum Chief Tom. Sabby time for do somet'ing. Sabby cow feller plenty 'fraid tiger. Makeum yell like tiger same way. Now all t'ing makeum O.K."

"You're a brick!" cried Tom slapping the Carib on the back.

"And a genius also," added Dr. Hewlett.

"There you are!" exclaimed the girl. "Sam hasn't anything on you now, Gandi. You've a title as good as his. Just tell him you're a genius and see what he has to say."

The Carib's brows puckered, then he grinned. "Me sabby," he declared. "Me catchum new name. Me gottum name 'genlus' all same Sam catchum name 'Nikky.'"

"Fine, but let's get going," suggested Tom. "I feel as

if I'd been through the Inquisition and I need about a ton of salve and plasters. But just the same," he added, "I got the beef."

"Remember saying you wouldn't need Gandhi to bring it in?" inquired the girl mischievously.

"Go ahead, rag me all you want to," Tom told her. "I deserve it for being so cocksure of myself. But just now I rather envy that calf that Gandhi's carrying. I feel as if I'd like to be carried in myself."

CHAPTER SIX

PIGS IS PIGS

ALTHOUGH TOM had escaped without serious injuries he was far too bruised to do any digging for some time. But idleness got on his nerves, and after a day or two of doing practically nothing he decided to kill time by fishing. Each string of fish that he brought in contained new and strange varieties and he became so deeply interested in the creatures that he quite forgot his lame muscles and countless deep scratches as well as his enforced idleness, in trying to capture some new species each day. Even when he had fully recovered from his experience and had again resumed digging in the cave with the others, he frequently went fishing, often accompanied by Jimmy, who found the multitude of forms of sea life more interesting than the fishes. It was while gazing at this under-water display one day that she was amazed to see a portion of the coral move slowly from one spot to another.

"Well, what do you see now?" asked Tom, his attention attracted by her involuntary exclamation of astonishment.

"I don't know," she replied. "I was sure I actually saw a mass of that yellow and brown coral break off and move to another rock. I know it isn't possible, but—oh, Tom, it's a fish! Look! There he is—swimming out in the open water. Did you ever see anything like it? Oh, do try and catch him. I'll bet even our black ichthyologist can't name that fish."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Tom as he saw the creature. "It does look exactly like a piece of detached coral at that. Don't know if I can catch the thing, but I'll try."

Scarcely had he spoken when the weird-looking fish turned towards the baited hook, circled it once and then gulped it down. An instant later it was flapping upon the rock beside the two.

"Gosh, how am I going to get him off the hook?" exclaimed Tom. "He's as thorny as that confounded tree where the bull tossed me. Just look at those spines all over his back and sides."

"I guess you'll have to let him die, first," the girl declared. "But did you ever see such a strange fish in your life? Why, his mouth is on the top of his head, his fins look like feet, he has humps on his back and he has seaweeds or something growing all over him."

"He's a genuine freak," agreed Tom. "But those things are not seaweeds, they're a part of him. I'd say he was a most perfect example of what we scientists call protective coloration—camouflage, you know; no wonder you mistook him for a lump of coral."

"I wonder what Sam will call him," laughed Jimmy.

"If he doesn't know the beast's name he'll make up one to suit," chuckled Tom. "But it would have to be some name to match his looks. He seems to have gasped his last gasp so maybe I can get my hook free."

"Be careful," the girl warned him, "those spines may be poisonous."

"I'm not taking any chances," Tom assured her. "I'll hold the beast with my foot. There you are," he continued as he freed the hook from the freak fish's jaws. "Guess

we'll call this a day. I'm anxious to hear Sam's expert diagnosis of this what-is-it."

But much to their surprise the Negro frankly admitted 'he had never seen such a fish before.' "Ah don't know he a-tall, chief," he declared. "Ah been humbuggin' rounabout the islands for most all me life but Ah don't never cotch me eye on to fish of that specie aforetime."

Doctor Hewlett was equally at a loss to identify the strange fish. "In some ways it resembles the poisonous scorpion fish of the Pacific," he said. "But in other respects it is quite distinct. But then, I'm no zoologist and I've never paid any particular attention to fishes—aside from their edible qualities when cooked."

"No make for cookum this feller," remarked Gandi, who had joined the others. "Him feller plenty bad, plenty what you callum, poison. S'pose eatum you makeum die plenty quick."

"So you know the beast!" Tom exclaimed. "Poison, is he? Well, suppose you tell us its name. How you callum this feller?"

"Me no sabby how callum English name," the Carib replied. "Carib callum metaballi."

"Translated that means 'like death' or 'deadly,'" the scientist told them.

"Too bad we can't preserve the beast," observed Tom.

"Ah can do that, chief," Sam announced. "Ah acquire the facility to preservate all manner of specimens."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Tom. "You don't happen to be an expert electrician or a civil engineer, do you, Sam? Now how in the deuce did you learn taxidermy?"

"Ah don't rightly know too much consarnin' electric matters," the Negro replied. "And Ah never been call

upon for to be hengineer like you say. But Ah long time employed by a gentleman who was engaged acquirin' specimens of all manner of birds and other objects likewise, and he teach me the faciltty of the aforesaid. Yaas, sir, chief, if you desire to preservate this fish Ah'll be please for to preparate he."

"Wouldn't Sam be simply priceless as a Man Friday on a desert island?" laughed Jimmy.

"Sam's all right," declared Tom, "but with all due respect to his manifold attainments I'd prefer Gandi if I had to choose between the two. Getting a fellow out of the jam I was in last week is a lot more important than stuffing dead fish or even cooking, I'd say."

"Wa la!" exclaimed Sam as he gathered up the fish. "You don't insinuate Ah'd had the assumption to cook *he*, does you, chief? No, sir, chief, he too ugly for true. He downright pure corruption, that what he is. Yaas, sir, he face and he body just obtrude the fac' he poison, an' no mistake."

The following morning when they entered the cave to resume their work they left Sam busy skinning the odd fish, a most serious expression on his black face and muttering to himself, and addressing far from flattering remarks to the subject of his attentions.

"I don't exactly envy Sam his job," chuckled Tom as he picked up his shovel. "Skinning that beast is like skinning a porcupine—only worse, for according to Gandi a prick from one of that fish's spines means a mighty sore finger or hand."

"Perhaps we shouldn't have permitted him to attempt it," said Dr. Hewlett. "If Sam is laid up it would be a real calamity."

"He won't be," declared Jimmy confidently. "Any

man who can bone a wild pigeon the way he does isn't going to get his fingers pricked by a fish's spines."

Then, as they fell to work, and with almost every spadeful of debris they uncovered more and more relics of the long-forgotten occupants of the cave, Sam and his poison fish faded from their memories.

But presently as they laboured, a distant yell followed by unmistakable African shouts recalled Sam vividly to mind.

The next instant a shrill scream from Gandi, startling crashing sounds, sharp squeals and strange cries mingled with the Negro's hoarse shouts, punctuated by the sizz-boom of the Carib's gun.

Seizing shovels and picks Tom and the scientist dashed for the cavern entrance with Jimmy bringing up the rear.

"Good Lord, has a cyclone struck the place!" cried Dr. Hewlett as they came within view of the camp. Everything was a wreck. The tent was torn down, the stove upset, dishes, cooking utensils and articles of clothing were scattered about. Sam was slowly descending from the lower branches of a small tree and Gandi was perched precariously on a pile of packing cases.

"What's happened? What's the matter?" cried the scientist.

Reaching the ground Sam limped to a box and seated himself. "Pigs, chief," he replied. "Pigs and pigs and more pigs. Yaas, sir, chief, they come a-rompin' and a-scootlin' hereabouts like they was bound discommode us. Yaas, sir, chief. Ah never knowed there is so many • pigs in all the world, an' that the truth."

"Me tellum makeum plenty pig same way," put in Gandi who had climbed down and was reloading his

ancient weapon. "Him feller pig plenty mad, plenty like all same like cow fadder makeum mad. Him big feller gotum plenty bad tusk, me sabby."

"Yaas, sir, chief," declared Sam. "They monstrous big pigs, chief, and they ain't scared of nothin'. Ah shout and Ah yell and Ah attempt to turn they aside when they come a-rarin'! But they face through the tent and knock down the stove an' mash up the dishes an'——"

"And you took to a tree and let a drove of pigs wreck the camp," snapped Tom. "You're a nice sort of camp boy."

Sam's face twisted and he stifled a groan. "No, sir, chief," he muttered. "Ah don' take to tree afore Ah defen' the camp, chief. Not afore the most biggest pig knock me down and juke me with he tushes. Ah——" Sam suddenly collapsed.

"Why, he's hurt!" cried Jimmy springing towards the Negro. "His clothes are covered with blood!"

"By Jove, you're right!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett as he examined the unconscious man. "Here, Tom, you and Gandi clear away the tent and get the medicine chest. Bring some water, Jimmy. Whew"—as he ripped away Sam's blood-soaked clothes—"he got an awful gash from that boar. Lucky it didn't go higher or to one side or it would have disembowelled him." Deftly and rapidly the scientist, aided by the girl, washed the deep gash in Sam's hip, applied antiseptics and sewed up the wound. "All right now, Sam," he assured the Negro as he opened his eyes and groaned. "Only a flesh wound but a nasty one. You'll be laid up for a few days but as well as ever inside a week. How did it happen?"

"Ah don't rightly know," Sam told him. "Ah was preparatin' of the fish and Ah hear a rushin' and turn

about and Ah see the pigs, and next Ah knows they was all about, and Gandi he was fightin' they. Ah see one big pig a-grabbin' the fish, and Ah couldn't permit he to take the fish, chief, so Ah 'wras'le he and he jukes me with he tushes. An' then, chief, takin' the facts of the case into consideration, Ah climbs up the tree. But Ah loses the fish, chief, and Ah had he most preservated in good shape."

"Hang the fish!" exclaimed Tom. "You should have taken to the tree and let it go. But how the deuce you chinnied up there with that cut gets me."

Sam grinned weakly. "Ah, 'spect Ah was too frightened to recollect Ah was juked," he said. "But honest to the Lord, chief, Ah does hope an' pray that fish is as much poison like the Ca'ib say, and that pig do eat he."

"I hope every darned one of the beasts took a bite of it," declared Tom, as he gazed ruefully at the wreckage strewn about. "Good Lord, what a mess! It will take all day to straighten things out. But what I'd like to know is why in-thunder those pigs took it into their fool heads to stampede through our camp."

"It seems to me," observed Jimmy, "that for a quiet, peaceful little spot this island holds more excitement to the square yard than any place I've known ever. We certainly can't complain of life being dull or monotonous here. Something's happening every minute."

It was late in the afternoon when the camp was finally restored to its former orderly state. To Dr. Hewlett's vast relief the cases of specimens were intact and unharmed and with the tireless energy and inexhaustible enthusiasm of the true scientist he resumed work on his collections.

Although Tom would have much preferred to stretch himself out and take a comfortable rest, he could ill

afford to relax while the older man was busy and Jimmy was assisting him. Being thus fully occupied no one noticed Oandi as he slipped away from the camp and it was not until the report of his gun reached their ears that they realised he had gone.

"Wonder what he's shot now," muttered Tom. "He's the most habitual hunter I've ever known. I should think he'd go mad in a city where he couldn't use that pop-gun of his every hour of the day."

"You can't say he doesn't use it to good advantage," the girl reminded him.

"Humph, it doesn't appear to have been much advantage in driving off those dratted pigs," growled Tom. "But I hope he got something. I'm hungry as a bear and no fresh meat on hand."

A few moments later the Indian appeared and Tom groaned. "Good heaven," he exclaimed, "he's brought in a pig! As if we hadn't had enough of pigs to last us a month."

Dropping his burden, Gandi thrust a hand into the wallet at his side.

"Him feller metaballi killum two pig," he announced. "Me findum all same dead like so. Mebbe Sam likeum him big feller pig tusk. Me bringum."

As he spoke the Carib drew four big gleaming white boars' tusks from his wallet and handed them to the Negro.

"Va la!" grinned Sam, "Ah bound Ah'm goin' to string these tushes and wear he around me neck like Ca'ib. Yaas, sir, Ah bound 'memorate this occasion and no mistake. Moresomever," he added, "Ah speculate they bound to be a charm to protec' me from pig jukin' of me with he tushes next time they come ranton' an'.

rarin' this side. But Ah does most truly be sorry and lamentin' the fact the fish is lost when Ah most done preparatin' he, notwithstandin' it poison kill the pig."

Tom turned to the Carib. "Gandi," he commanded, "take that darned pig and heave him overboard. We'll dine on baked beans. And don't you dare cook bacon for breakfast to-morrow."

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

WHEN DR. HEWLETT emerged from his tent the following morning he was astonished to see Sam preparing breakfast.

"What do you mean by being up and about?" he demanded as the Negro greeted him cheerily. "I told you to stay in your hammock. You've no business to be using that injured leg."

Sam grinned. "Yaas, sir, chief," he replied. "Ah knows Ah disobeys you instructions, but Ah bound cook brekfus'. Yaas, sir, Ah'm the cook and Ah don't permit pigs to discomfobulate me duty, chief, but they sure is pure corruption for true. An' Ah don't employ me leg for to cook, chief."

"Answer that if you can!" laughed Tom who had appeared on the scene.

The scientist threw up his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "It's his leg, not mine," he said, "and I don't suppose I can force him to remain quietly in his hammock. But if he insists upon using it and it gets worse it will be his own fault, and I won't have any pity for him. In fact, I'll, I'll——"

The girl's merry laughter interrupted his words. "Just what will you do?" she inquired teasingly.

Dr. Hewlett grinned. "Oh, I suppose I'll patch it up again," he replied.

But there was no occasion for him to worry over the results of Sam's insistence upon being up and about.

Neither was he called upon to "patch up" the wound, for the Negro attended to the matter himself, and expressing far greater confidence in the curative powers of "bush" than in Dr. Hewlett's medication, he gathered a number of leaves and roots and applied these to the wound.

"The rapidity with which that gash has healed is almost incredible," the scientist declared. "I don't know what Sam's 'bush' is but it must possess almost magical curative properties."

"Well, why not ask him?" suggested Jimmy. Then turning to the Negro. "Sam—no, I beg your pardon, Nikky, what is the bush you used on your cut?" she inquired.

"Ah don't can say rightly, mistress," he replied. "In Demerara it called 'devil doer,' down the island the Patois folk call it 'mer sang,' and the Spigs over to Panama call it 'yerba maravilla'; but Ah spect it just 'bush.'"

"There you are!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "How can any one identify a plant with so many aliases? As Sam says, it is 'just bush.'"

"It proves the truth of the trite old saying that a rose by any other name would be as sweet," Jimmy reminded them.

"Beggin' you pardon, misters," said Sam scratching his neck and looking rather embarrassed. "Ah reach the conclusion Ah prefer me cognome, of Sam in preference to the Nikky appellation you bestowed on me. Takin' the facts of the case into consideration, it appear like the aforesaid designation sounds like Ah'm some specie of 'Chineeman or similar abstraction! Does you mind callin' me just Sam, Mistress Jimmy?"

"Of course not," the girl assured him, striving hard

to stifle her desire to laugh. "We'll all call you Sam henceforth and forever. You can add an 'I' to your name for ichthyologist together with the 'M.D.' and a 'C.' for cooks and 'T.' for taxidermist. Then by the time you get back home you'll have a most impressive 'handle' to your name."

For a moment Sam looked puzzled, as if not quite certain whether the girl was joking or in earnest. Then suddenly, a light of understanding spread over his black face and he grinned. "Wa la, mistress," he exclaimed. "Ah learnin' one thing and another every day. Ah been speculatin' what is the signification of the letters appended to the chief's name, and now Ah knows. Yaas indeed, mistress."

Amid the laughter that followed Dr. Hewlett rose. "I think that leaves nothing further to be said on the subject," he observed. "It is high time we resumed our work in the cave."

Ever since they had first commenced excavations in the cave they had confined their labours to the same spot, but it was slow work, for every spadeful of dust, decomposed rock, discarded broken sea-shells and other debris had to be carefully sifted and examined for specimens. And as a comparatively large area yielded results the men had not dug deeply, but had merely removed the upper layer of material for a depth of barely two feet.

"It's rather strange," remarked the scientist as he examined a pile of the disinterred fragments of utensils mixed with broken shells and bits of charcoal, "that there does not appear to be any definite stratification of remains in this particular spot. Everything seems to be tossed together in a most perplexing hit-or-miss fashion. And we haven't unearthed a single perfect or complete speci-

men this morning. Hitherto the results have indicated a residential site, but this material is such as one might expect to find in a kitchen midden. If I didn't know it impossible I would say someone had already carried on excavations here."

"The people who lived here must have had a rubbish pile, I suppose," said Jimmy. "And as there aren't any signs of their refuse outside the cave they must have dumped it in here somewhere. I don't expect they were what we would consider good housekeepers."

"Quite true," agreed Tom. "But we found their rubbish pile as you call it over near the entrance on the other side of the cave. It isn't likely they had two refuse heaps."

"Hmm, the only explanation I can suggest is that there was a depression here and the occupants filled it in with refuse in order to level the space for their greatest convenience," said the scientist. "Anyway," he added, rising and brushing the dust from his garments, "we are wasting valuable time by continuing this particular spot. We'll move a few yards to the other side, Tom."

"No refuse here," announced Tom as the men resumed digging in the new location and he carefully removed a stone celt with wooden haft intact from its resting place. "But isn't it rather strange that we haven't come across a burial?"

"I don't think so," the scientist told him. "I expect the dead were either interred outside the cave or in some other cavern. Jimmy, you might make a very careful search and see if you can discover any indications. I'm extremely anxious to secure skeletons or crania of the race."

"It strikes me as unusual to find so many perfect implements," remarked Tom a few moments later. "In

all my experience I have never come upon such wealth of perfect specimens except in graves. Judging by our finds I should say these people suddenly deserted the place, leaving all their possessions behind them."

"Possibly they did," said Dr. Hewlett. "Sometimes," he added, "I feel that archæology is a most unsatisfactory sort of science, with a lot of tommy-rot connected with it. With all that has been done, here in America especially, we really know very little indeed with certainty. We assume and speculate and formulate theories to account for facts, but we don't really know much. And every little while some new discovery knocks all of our pet theories into a cocked hat as you might say. For example, here we are gathering specimens of beautifully-made stone implements and excellent pottery in a cave on an island where theoretically there should be no pottery worth mentioning and only shell and bone implements and weapons. Don't ask me why the former occupants of this cavern left their possessions for our benefit. Your guess is as good as mine, my boy."

"Don't I know it!" said Tom. "But in a way I don't agree with you. To my mind the greatest charm of archæology is its uncertainty and its mysteries. Every time we explore some old ruin or dig a grave or a place like this it's a sort of adventure."

"I should imagine," said Dr. Hewlett, dryly, "that you would find the adventure of digging up remains quite tame compared to being treed by a bull."

Tom grinned. "That wasn't an adventure, that was a calamity, for me. The darned bull had all the fun!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

JIMMY MEETS A DRAGON

THE DAYS passed quickly on the little cay, for there was plenty to occupy the minds and hands of every one. Jimmy, systematically exploring the caves, had at last discovered the burial place of the long-forgotten inhabitants of the island, and the two archæologists were reaping a rich harvest of specimens, as well as skeletons and several skulls, which delighted Dr. Hewlett immensely. Jimmy was kept busy transcribing the scientist's notes and cataloguing the specimens. Tom's camp duties and cooking occupied his time, and Gandi, when not digging with the others, spent most of his hours hunting. But there were plenty of opportunities for recreation. Bathing and swimming in the tepid tropical sea was a constant delight. Jimmy took an intense interest in anything and everything new or strange, and she seldom returned from her walks and rambles without bringing back some strange insect, plant or other specimen for the scientist to identify.

On one of her trips as she was walking along a dry and rather arid stretch of rocky shore she was startled by some large creature rushing through the thorny brush. She had expected to see a wild pig break through the cover, but the creature that suddenly appeared was such a strange and fearsome-looking beast that the girl gave an involuntary cry of fright and sprang back. Although only six feet in length the beast resembled a

dinosaur more than anything. Along its back and its long slender tail was a row of upstanding spines. Beneath its throat was a wrinkled dewlap of brilliant orange-coloured skin. Upon its nose were two short stout horns, and with bright beady eyes the weird creature gazed boldly at the girl, its green and blue scales glistening in the sun.

Then, as the menacing-looking animal reared itself high on its crooked legs, and hissed viciously at the girl, she turned and ran, half expecting to feel the hideous beast leap upon her back at any instant. But when she finally overcame her terror, and, summoning all her courage, halted and turned about, there was no sign of the creature.

When she reached the camp and told the story of her adventure, Dr. Hewlett laughed. "You're a brave girl to be frightened by a lizard," he told her. "The creature was only an iguana. A perfectly harmless and inoffensive animal."

"He certainly didn't look harmless," she declared. "I didn't dream there were such monsters on the cay."

"Me sabby him feller," remarked Gandi who had overheard the scientist's words. "Me go for catchum. Him feller 'guana plenty good for eatum."

"You don't mean to say any human being would actually eat such a beast!" cried Jimmy.

"They are excellent," Dr. Hewlett told her. "The meat is as white and delicate as any chicken. I've dined on them many a time."

"So have I," declared Tom. "When I was in Yucatan last year iguanas were our mainstay. We had 'em boiled, stewed, fried, broiled and roasted, and they were as good one way as another."

"Well, you'll never catch me eating one of the ugly beasts," Jimmy told them. "I'd as soon eat spiders or snakes."

"I can't vouch for the spiders," said the scientist. "But I've eaten snakes, and you forget that canned rattlesnake is considered a great delicacy in our own country and is served in the most exclusive clubs and restaurants in New York."

"Someone should introduce canned iguana," said Tom. "I'll bet it would take."

"Not if they had a picture of the creature on the cans," declared the girl.

"Perhaps not," assented Dr. Hewlett. "Prejudice and custom play a most important part in the diet of civilised man. We eat far too much with our eyes, as I might say. Most persons consider frogs' legs a dainty and delectable food yet would shudder at the thought of dining on iguana, and while crabs and shrimp are regarded highly, how many people would eat grasshoppers or the grubs known as 'groo-groo worms' in the West Indies?"

"Wa la! chief!" exclaimed Sam, who had been an attentive listener to the conversation. "Just to hear you speak concernin' groo-groo worms makes me stomach rear up and yowl for they. Yass, sir, chief, Ah could 'similate a-plenty groo-groo worms right now and that the truth."

"There you are!" laughed the scientist. "Sam's mouth fairly waters for a meal of palm grubs while you feel nauseated at the thought of eating them." Then, turning to the Negro, "If you pine for groo-groo worms why don't you go and get some?" he asked. "There are plenty of cabbage palms on the cay and where there are cabbage palms, you'll usually find the grubs. I'll wager Gandi

can get some for you. And that reminds me. A nice crisp palm cabbage would be a most welcome addition to our menu. Gandi, 'spose can catchum palm cabbage same way?"

The Carib nodded. "Can catchum," he replied.

"If you catchum a palm cabbage, don't you catchum one that has worms in it," Jimmy warned him.

But she freely admitted that the palm cabbage was delicious when Sam served it at lunch the following day. And when she saw Sam and Gandi munching what appeared to be roasted chestnuts and was informed they were groo-groo worms she was rather surprised at not feeling nauseated or disgusted, although she hastily and in no uncertain terms declined their invitation to sample the delicacy.

"In some respects this is the most enjoyable expedition I have ever been on," observed Tom when they were dining a few days later. "No vicious mosquitoes up here. No pestilential sand flies. Digging in the cave where it's cool is a cinch compared to working out in the hot sun, and finally, bully good food properly cooked instead of canned beans and the usual run of grub. If any one ever tasted anything better than this fricasse I'd like to know when and where."

"It is awfully good," agreed Jimmy. "I wonder what it is. It isn't pigeon. Sam, what sort of bird did you use to make this stew?"

The cook hesitated. "Beggin' your pardon, mistress," he said at last. "Ah don't compound it from bird, Mistress Jimmy, Ah bound to say it 'guana and that the truth."

"Iguana!" cried the girl, dropping her knife and fork and half-rising from the table. "I—you—" Suddenly

she burst out laughing and picked up her fork. "I can be as good a sport as any one," she announced as she helped herself to a mouthful of the white tender meat. "It was a mean trick to play on me, but iguana or not it's certainly delicious."

"Good for you, my girl!" chuckled Dr. Hewlett. "But blame me, not Sam, for the trick. I told him to serve iguana and say nothing. I knew if you once tasted it you'd enjoy it."

"I do," she told him, "and I can't imagine a pleasanter way of getting even with the beast for scaring me than by eating him."

As they rose from the table Jimmy suddenly stopped, staring fixedly at a clump of grass. "Am I seeing things," she exclaimed, "or is that really a sea shell crawling along over there?"

Dr. Hewlett glanced in the direction she indicated. "Yes, and no," he told her. "It's a sea shell, but it's not the shell that is crawling, it's a hermit crab within the shell."

"But what—why, there's another, and—oh, look, there are dozens of them!" cried the excited girl.

"Hundreds, you mean," Tom declared. "The place is alive with them."

"But what on earth are they doing here?" she asked. "I thought hermit crabs lived in the ocean. I——"

"Hi yi, the sojers is on they march!" exclaimed Sam. "They bound for reach the sea."

"There's your answer," laughed the scientist. "Soldier crabs on their annual pilgrimage to the sea."

"But I don't understand yet," persisted Jimmy. "Where have they been and why did they leave the sea?"

"They're land crabs," Dr. Hewlett explained. "But once

a year they march to the seashore to lay their eggs and to secure new shells to replace those they have outgrown."

"It's funny I never saw one before, in all my wandering about the cay," said the girl as they watched the hordes of funny creatures trundling their way through the camp, while the surrounding grass and brush rustled with the movements of multitudes of others.

"Probably you didn't happen to notice them," the scientist said. "Except at the time of their migrations they live singly, here and there, and as they withdraw into their shells and remain motionless at the first sign of danger they escape notice. But when instinct tells them it is time for their annual trek they appear as if by magic, coming from every direction to gather in vast numbers as if at a prearranged spot, and march straight towards the nearest seashore."

"I've heard of them and I've seen them here and there," said Tom, "but never before on the march. How the deuce do they know the route to the sea?"

"That's an unsolved mystery of Nature," Dr. Hewlett replied. "Blind instinct perhaps. But they do know and, what is more, nothing will turn them aside. You can turn them about, place them in a box, carry them miles back from a spot and the moment they are released they will resume their interrupted course."

"That's the strangest thing I've ever heard," declared the girl.

Tom picked up one of the crabs, turned it about several times, rolled it over and then placed it on the table. For an instant the hermit remained motionless within its shell. Then out came its claws, legs and long antennæ, and turning quickly about it scurried across the table top in a straight line for the shore.

Tom chuckled. "If a fellow could only train these chaps to head for any desired spot they'd be a lot better than any compass," he said. "Talk about your honing pigeons!"

By now the army of crabs had passed on and only a few stragglers were hurrying along in the wake of their fellows.

"I'm going to follow them and see what they do when they reach the shore," announced Jimmy.

"Guess I'll go along, too," said Tom. "I'd rather like to see the end of their pilgrimage!"

"I think I'll accompany you, also," announced the scientist. "It's an interesting sight to see them house-hunting and moving into new shells."

For some time the three watched the soldier crabs as the creatures scuttled over the beach and hunted about in the shallow water for empty shells, and Jimmy fairly chortled with amusement at the manner in which the crabs tried out the new shells, withdrawing their bodies from their old quarters and popping into another and another, until they found one which exactly suited them.

"Oh look at that immense one there!" exclaimed the girl, pointing to a huge shell moving jerkily over the bottom a few feet from shore.

"No crab tenant in that," Dr. Hewlett told her. "That's a queen conch. I'll show you something that will surprise you in a moment."

Kicking off his shoes, the scientist waded into the water and securing the conch shell carried it several yards up the beach and placed it on the sand.

"Now you'll see a real circus performance," he announced.

For a few moments the conch remained motionless. Then slowly, almost imperceptibly, the mottled slimy animal emerged. The next instant the heavy shell leaped from the sand as if a spring had been released beneath it, and falling back with a thud rolled several feet down the sloping beach. It was such a totally unexpected and amazing feat that Jimmy could only stare incredulously at the inert cumbersome shell.

"Gosh," ejaculated Tom. "I never . . . There it goes again!"

As he spoke, the conch once more sprang up and rolled several feet nearer to the water.

"But how does it do it?" cried the girl, as the conch again repeated its astonishing acrobatic stunt.

"By means of its claw," Dr. Hewlett informed her, picking up the conch and showing her the strong, horny curved claw on its muscular foot.

"When am I going to wake up?" exclaimed Tom. "It's dreamy enough to see a five-pound conch shell playing hop-scotch on a beach, but a shell with a claw is a nightmare."

"It's not a true claw, but the door or operculum of the shell," the scientist explained. "But it serves a dual purpose, for by digging the claw into the sand the animal can hurl itself upward or drag itself forward as you have seen. And if need arises it also serves as a weapon of defence."

"It looks dangerous," said Jimmy. "I should think it could 'joke' a person as Sam says."

"I never heard of a conch doing so," said Dr. Hewlett. "Now we'll take our acrobatic conch to Sam. He'll transform it to a most delectable chowder, I'll warrant."

"I wonder if you're joking," said the girl. "But after

that iguana I'm ready to believe a conch shell is edible."

Tom laughed. "Not the shell, Jimmy," he told her "just the critter inside. We don't even eat the oysters' shells, you know."

Sam's eyes shone when he saw the conch. "You bound 'preciate he, yaas, sir," he declared. "When Ah compromise this gent'man into a chowder your stomach goin' to sing Hallelujah for true."

"Well, I've had a lot of strange experiences to-day," said Jimmy, "but to hear our stomachs singing Hallelujah would be the strangest of all."

Sam, who had been busy with the conch, uttered a surprised ejaculation.

"Hi yi, mistress!" he exclaimed dropping the shell and turning to the girl with a delighted grin on his black face. "You bound sing Hallelujah even if your stomach ain't. Yaas, indeed, Mistress Jimmy, this your lucky day for true. Here what Ah just discover in your conch."

As he spoke, Sam reached out a huge black paw and placed a shimmering rose-pink sphere the size of a pea upon the table before her.

Jimmy gasped as she stared at it. "Why—why it's a pink pearl!" she exclaimed in awed tones.

"And a magnificent one," said Dr. Hewlett.

"I'll say this is your lucky day!" declared Tom.

The scientist chuckled. "It would seem," he observed, "that you literally secured this pearl for a song. You certainly should reward Sam by singing Hallelujah."

CHAPTER NINE

UNWELCOME VISITORS

"IT DOESN'T seem possible that we have been here nearly three weeks," said Jimmy as they seated themselves at breakfast one morning.

"Only ten days more and we'll be packing up and sailing away. I'll be really sorry to leave the cay."

"Yes, time has flown," agreed her uncle, "and we haven't half completed the work of excavations."

"Just the same, we've secured a wonderful collection," Tom reminded him. "You have enough material for a dozen monographs now. And we've made some truly notable discoveries."

"Such as the fact that mimosa trees are not the most suitable refuges from mad bulls," laughed the girl.

"And that iguanas are excellent eating," Tom reminded her.

"Not forgetting that every conch doesn't contain a pearl," added Dr. Hewlett. "I wonder how many innocent conchs you and Tom have sacrificed in your search for more pink pearls."

Sam, who was about to serve the scientist, suddenly stiffened, his head cocked on one side, listening. "Wala!" he ejaculated. "Ah hear the sound of a boat, chief. Ah most certainly does. Takin' the facts of the case into consideration Ah assumes we bound for to have company, chief."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Tom. "I haven't heard a

sound, and if a boat did land it would be with fishermen or turtlers, not visitors."

"Hist!" cautioned the scientist. "Sam is right. Someone is approaching. I most certainly heard voices in the direction of the landing place. I wonder if it is possible that the skipper forgot the date and returned ahead of time."

Scarcely had he spoken when a group of men emerged from the pathway to the shore and stepped forward in the open space before the camp.

"Golly, what a tough-looking lot!" exclaimed Jimmy as the four strangers came to a halt a few yards from the tent.

Rough, unkempt, wild-looking fellows they were, barefooted and with skins varying from yellow to black, and each carrying a wicked-looking, long-bladed machete, while their leader, a villainous-faced mulatto, was armed with an old carbine. With his pock-marked yellow skin, his fierce moustache, his cruel, twisted mouth, his bloodshot eyes and greasy hair he might well have been the reincarnation of one of the villainous old pirates who once made the cay their lair.

"*Buenos dias*," he greeted the scientist and the others, baring stained yellow teeth, while his piggish eyes roved about the camp. "Who da boss here?"

"I'm in charge," Dr. Hewlett replied. "What do you want?"

"We want me pay for me peegs what you keel," the fellow declared. "*Si señor*, you come here an' you keel me peegs. 'Das alla right. Mebbe you want peeg for eat an' you keel heem. But he me peeg an' you pay for heem, sec. *Si señor*, he good peegs. He worth twenty-five dollar each one peeg. Mebbe you keel two-t'ree, mebbe.

Quien sabe, how me know? An' mebbe bimeby you keel heem more peeg. Alla right, you pay me hundred dollar an' keel heem alla you want. Tha' good bargain, no?"

"Decidedly no!" exclaimed the scientist, who for once showed signs of losing his temper at the ridiculous demand of the mulatto. "What proof have I that you own any pigs here? And even if they are your pigs I'd never pay any such sum as twenty-five dollars each for them. I don't believe they belong to you or to any one else. They're wild pigs, and in my opinion this is an out-and-out holdup, and, and"—his indignation getting the better of him—"and you're a confounded scoundrel."

"I'll say you are!" cried Tom before the fellow could reply. "You've some nerve coming here and demanding pay for wild hogs. Now clear out! *Vamos*, and step lively, *pronto!*" As he spoke he leaped from his seat with his fists clenched threateningly.

"Don't!" cautioned Jimmy, grasping his coat. "They're armed and that rascal might shoot. He looks dangerous enough to kill any one."

The piratical leader's thick lips parted in a wicked grin, and his men took a step nearer, fingering their machetes menacingly.

"So-o the Americans theenk me one liar an' beeg rascal, eh?" he hissed, shifting his gun meaningly. "An' he not pay for me peeg, no? That ees to make me laugh, yes. The Americano take me peeg, I take the money. *Si, señor*, what you go do 'bout it, eh? Pay me hundred dollar an' me say *adios* an' not come no more. No pay me an' we take what we want an' mebbe sell for two, t'ree hundred dollar. It ees one what you call heem—a deal, no?"

Dr. Hewlett was fairly seething with impotent rage,

for he realised that he was practically helpless in the face of the scoundrel's preposterous demands. Despite the fact that he felt positive that the fellow was lying and had no claim whatever to the wild swine, and that it was nothing short of a deliberate hold-up, he was convinced that the rascals were dangerous, and that to refuse their leader's terms would probably result in an attack, a raid and the chances of bloodshed. And it would assuredly end in the loss of far more than one hundred dollars' worth of equipment. On the other hand, if he submitted and paid the villain, the chances were that the men would help themselves to whatever they fancied anyway. Yet to sit calmly and be robbed was unbearable. If only he and his companions were armed. If Tom's gun were within reach instead of being inside the tent. If—his thoughts were interrupted by Tom who, fully realising that to attack the rascals would only precipitate a tragedy, could not control his tongue.

"By thunder!" he cried. "If I had a gun I'd shoot you as quick as I'd kill a pig. But I'll remember that ugly face of yours anywhere. Just wait until the police get after you. You can't get away with piracy nowadays, you consummate ass!"

The leader scowled savagely and his lips drew into a wolfish snarl.

"Ees thata so?" he growled. "But the *señor* forget he have not the gun, an' meebe he will not tell the *policia*, no. Mebbe he never leave Buccaneer's Cay, no. Mebbe he——"

"Mebbe me shootum you feller like so!" at these words, coming so unexpectedly from the rear, everyone turned to see Gandi crouched behind a rock, his gun levelled at the leader of the raiders. For a brief instant the scoundrel

stared at the Carib and his weapon, as if at an apparition. His jaw gaped, his yellow skin took on a greenish hue, and he fairly shook with abject terror.

"No, no, *por Dios*, don't shoot!" he stammered as he took a step backwards, but making no move with his own gun.

With all attention focused upon Gandi, Tom had leaped for the tent and now reappeared with his gun, while Sam, encouraged by the sudden turn of events, recovered from his fear and seizing a machete in one hand and an axe in the other advanced ready for battle.

"Drop that gun and hands up!" barked Tom as he swung his gun to his shoulder. At his words the terrified mulatto jumped, wheeled about to see the twin muzzles of Tom's carbine covering him, and dropping his carbine raised his hands in the air, while his comrades turned and rared for the landing, leaving their leader to look out for himself.

"No, no, no!" babbled the mulatto. "For the love of God, do not keel me, *señor*! Eet is but a joke. I go, I depart! The peeg we will forget heem."

"I'll say we'll forget him!" snapped Tom. "Seems to me the joke's all on you. I've half a mind to give you the sound thrashing you deserve. Here, Sam, pick up his gun and see if it's loaded. Empty, eh! Just a bluff like this buzzard here. O.K. Come along, Gandi, we'll herd this rat to his boat and see him on his way home."

While he muttered and expostulated in a mixture of broken English and Spanish, the rascal was escorted to the landing where his fellows sat, thoroughly cowed and subdued, in the boat they had shoved from shore. But they refused point-blank to come nearer in order to permit their leader to embark.

"All right, you'll have to swim for it," Dr. Hewlett told the rascal.

"I'm darned sorry the water isn't alive with sharks and crocodiles," added Tom. "Hop to it, *hombre!* In you go and be quick about it. You interrupted my breakfast and my coffee's getting cold."

Cursing and fuming but helpless to resist, the leader plunged into the water and half-wading, half-swimming reached the boat and clambered in.

But as he joined his fellows and they bent to their oars he recovered some of his bravado. Turning, he shook his fist at the scientist and the others on the shore, and shouted a volley of English and Spanish curses and a tirade of threats.

"Here, take your old gun!" cried the scientist, hurling the useless carbine at the boat. The fellow ducked, the weapon splashed into the water, and Tom chuckled. Then, as another volley of foul oaths came from the retreating mulatto, Tom raised his gun. "Get going!" he shouted, "I've heard enough of your lingo."

As he spoke he fired, and as the bird shot spattered across the water within a few feet of the boat, the men strained at their oars, their leader flung himself into the bottom of the craft, and the next moment boat and occupants vanished beyond a clump of mangroves where the topmast of a small sloop showed above the trees.

"Well, that's that," remarked Tom as the three men retraced their way to the camp. Then, clapping Gandi on the back: "Plenty good boy!" he exclaimed. "Guess you saved the day, Gandi."

"And very probably some of our lives as well," the scientist reminded him. Then, turning to the Carib, he asked how he had happened to appear so unexpectedly

and opportunely upon the scene. The Indian explained that he had gone on an early morning hunt, but hearing the sound of a boat's sails being lowered, he had gone to the shore thinking the sloop had arrived. Then as he saw the wild-looking fellows rowing towards the landing, instinct had warned him they were on no peaceful mission, and sneaking through the woods he had followed them and had watched all that took place until he had decided it was time for him to act.

"Huh, him feller plenty bad, me sabby," he added at the conclusion of his story. "All same, him feller make for shootum, me shootum him feller too quick like so."

Tom laughed. "Guess that fizz-boom-bam wouldn't have caused any fatalities," he said, "but that scalawag didn't know it wasn't a lethal weapon."

Gandi grinned. "Me tellum killum that feller all right. Killum all same killum pig. Him feller all same pig, me sabby."

"Only difference is he isn't good to eat," agreed Tom. "Well, we've seen the last of him, so let's eat and get to work."

"I'm not so sure about that—seeing the last of him," said Dr. Hewlett as they resumed their interrupted meal. "He threatened to return and if he does he will doubtless come with a larger party and better armed. He won't depend upon an empty carbine as a bluff next time. I am really quite worried."

"I'm not," Tom declared. "He's seen enough of us. He just put up a big bluff and it didn't work. We'll never set eyes on him and his gang again."

"I've been wondering how he knew we *had* killed pigs, and why he dared to try to frighten us into paying for them," said Jimmy. "Where do you think he came from?"

He didn't seem like a native of Anona—they're so quiet and peaceable. It seems to me there's a mystery about his visit."

"Nonsense," Tom assured her. "I admit he may not be a local rascal. He's probably a smuggler from Cuba or Santo Domingo, or maybe a fisherman, who just happened along, and finding us here decided to try to bluff us into paying him. He knew there are pigs on the cay and that the chances are we had shot some of them. That gave him the idea of claiming they belonged to him."

"Beggin' you pardon, chief," said Sam. "Ah assume he knows the cay right well already. Plenty smugglers come this side and catch pigs. But howsomever he come, he sure is corruption, yaas, sir, he pure corruption and no mistake."

"I thoroughly agree with you there," chuckled Dr. Hewlett. "Very probably the rascals did drop in here after pork, and finding us here decided to help themselves to our possessions. He knew I would not consent to pay the hundred dollars he demanded, and he would have run little risk by robbing or even by murdering us. No one would have been the wiser until the sloop called for us. Even then there would be no evidence to show who committed the crime. I am sorry we are not better equipped with firearms and haven't a camp that can be adequately protected."

"Why didn't you keep the carbine?" Jimmy asked him. "That would have been one more gun."

"It wouldn't have been of any use—except as a club," Tom told her. "It wasn't loaded and I doubt if the rascal had any shells for it. And it wasn't fit to be used—the lock was so rusty I doubt if it could have been fired.

But"—he added, turning to Dr. Hewlett with a grin—"it's too bad you forgot to ask the governor of Anona to supply us with an armed police guard."

"Even assuming I had done so he wouldn't have furnished a guard," the scientist replied. "The ownership of Buccaneer's Cay is uncertain. It's a sort of No Man's Land, which in a way adds to our danger."

"Why not take possession in the name of Uncle Sam?" suggested the girl.

"By Jove, that's not half a bad idea," exclaimed her uncle. "I believe we have an American flag somewhere. I'll hunt it up and fly it. Then in case that scalawag returns I'll inform him that he is on United States territory. Perhaps the sight of our flag, and my bluff may cause him to withdraw."

"It may—if he comes, which he won't," declared Tom with assurance. "But we'll nail to the mast our starry flag just the same."

"And if he arrives we'll demand payment for allowing his swine to trespass on the sacred soil of the United States," laughed Jimmy.

With all due ceremony the flag was hoisted to the top of a long bamboo pole above the camp. Three lusty cheers were given, even Sam who boasted proudly of being a "subjec' of the King" joining in with a will. Then, realising that even if Dr. Hewlett's forebodings proved true and the raiders returned that it would be some time before they reappeared, the party resumed their work within the cavern.

CHAPTER TEN

GANDI SAVES THE DAY

IT WAS only natural that for several days the chief topic of conversation should have been the unwelcome visitors to the cay.

"I don't see why you should worry over their possible return," Tom told Dr. Hewlett, when the latter again expressed his fear that the departing leader's threat might be carried out. "Even if they actually planned to come back and raid us they'd scarcely have time. It would take them at least two days to make Anona, assuming they came from there, and another day to reach Cuba or Santo Domingo if that's where they belong. Even if they turned right around and came back they couldn't get here before our sloop arrives."

"Quite true," the scientist agreed, "provided," he continued, "that our sloop as you call it arrives on time and that we set sail immediately. But time, to the natives of these islands, is of little importance and I would not be at all surprised if the sloop should be a week late. Moreover, I do not feel at all certain that there is not some connivance between those rascals' visit and the skipper of our sloop. If so, he may not return for us."

"Then we'll be marooned here!" cried Jimmy.

"Temporarily, yes, if he doesn't fulfil his promise," her uncle told her. "But the officials, as well as the consular agent, at Anona know where we are and undoubtedly a vessel would eventually be sent to investigate."

"I hadn't thought of the possibility of that skipper

having anything to do with that gang coming here," said Tom. "But now you mention it I shouldn't wonder if you're right. I expect all of these mixed bloods are wreckers and smugglers at heart and would turn out-and-out pirates if they had a chance. I noticed that confounded skipper had an avaricious expression when he looked at our stuff. He might have tipped the others off to the fact that we are not heavily armed and would be easy marks."

"I really can't believe he had a part in it," declared the girl. "He may have mentioned our being here or said something that gave those scoundrels the idea of trying to rob us, but I don't believe he had any real part in it. And if he did it seems to me he'd be sure to come for us just to make it appear he is innocent. If he didn't keep his promise it would look as if he had a guilty conscience and would throw all the more suspicion upon him."

"I admit there is some logic in that argument," said the scientist. "Well, perhaps my fears and forebodings are unfounded. However, I do think we should maintain a watch at the landing place. For all we know, those four may muster up courage enough to come sneaking back some night trusting to take us by surprise, or they may meet another boatload of their fellows and join forces and return."

"Maybe you're right," assented Tom. "They're a nasty bunch—pure corruption, as Sam says, and we can't afford to take any chances of a surprise raid. I suppose Gandhi is the best man to act as lookout at the landing."

"Yes, no doubt about that," declared Dr. Hewlett, "but we cannot well spare him if we are to complete our excavations before we leave."

Jimmy laughed gaily. "Why, you just said we might

be marooned here indefinitely!" she reminded him. "Why worry about not completing your work before the sloop arrives if you fear it may never show up? But all joking aside, why can't I keep watch? I'm not needed in the cave and I'd as soon stay down at the landing as up here. Then in the afternoon when you stop digging, Gandi can relieve me and I can carry on with my clerical duties as usual."

"Himm, I think that suggestion may be the solution to the problem," the scientist replied. "If any one should appear you would be in no danger, but could notify us at once. And with a lean-to at the landing Gandi could remain there all night. Yes, I think that is our best plan."

Accordingly, a small thatched shed was erected near the landing-place and a constant vigil was maintained.

But the days passed, nothing occurred to disturb them, and anxious to complete their work before the arrival of the sloop, the men worked harder than ever in the caverns. These had proved a rich field for excavations and quantities of specimens had been unearthed. There were stone and shell implements, broken pottery, ancient wooden articles, bone fish-hooks and awls, a few coarse textiles of yucca fibre, a number of baskets and several complete skeletons of the aborigines. As fast as the specimens had been labelled and catalogued they had been packed in strong wooden cases piled under a waterproof canvas shelter-tent, and covered with a tarpaulin.

Greatly elated at the success of his expedition, and deeply regretting that he had not planned a longer stay on the cay, Dr. Hewlett seemed relieved and pleased rather than disappointed or worried when the sloop failed to appear at the expiration of the month.

"You actually seem to enjoy the idea of being

marooned," Jimmy stated. "Well, I suppose we might be much worse off. This isn't a desert island by any means. We can't starve to death, and we already have our Man Friday or rather two of them."

"I am not contemplating being marooned," her uncle declared. "You forget that your logical argument as to the sloop's captain returning as evidence of his innocence, assuming that he had a part in the attempted raid, convinced me that he assuredly will return. I believe I mentioned that I should not be surprised if he came late, however, and I sincerely hope he does not arrive for some days. The delay will enable us to complete our work in the cave."

So, taking advantage of their additional time on the island, the men became completely absorbed in the work of excavating and gave scarcely a passing thought to the overdue sloop, or the rascals who had paid them a visit. Then one day as they were busy in the burial cave, they were rudely interrupted by Sam who rushed into the cavern excited and breathless.

"Wa la, chief, they's come back!" he gasped. "It a big sloop, chief, and it carryin' a-plenty men."

"Are you sure it's not our sloop?" Dr. Hewlett demanded as, dropping shovel and pick, they dashed from the cave.

"Yaas, sir, chief," declared Sam. "Ah was down at the landin' talkin' with Gandhi and Ah see them plain as is. And Ah recognise that yaller spigotty nigger what come beforetime. And he corruption, chief, he pure corruption."

"Then they have returned!" cried Tom. "Well, they didn't surprise us this time. Where's Gandhi? Where's Jimmy?"

"Gandi he a-spyin' on they," Sam told him. "And Mistress Jimmy, Ah don't know whereabouts she is. She gone for take a walk in the bush some time since and she not returned yet, chief."

"Thank heaven she isn't here," Dr. Hewlett exclaimed. "I only hope she's at the other end of the island and stays away. The Lord knows what may happen."

"If we can't drive them off we can pay them as a last resort," said Tom. "But I've plenty of cartridges, and even if a shotgun isn't exactly a deadly weapon except at close range, double B's and number four shot are darned unpleasant. Besides, Gandi's sneaking somewhere in their rear, and finally there's Old Glory to bluff them."

"If they attempt to attack us and raid the camp our best plan will be to retire to the cave," declared the scientist as they reached the tent and Tom loaded his gun and filled his pockets with shells. "It's fortunate that we stored so much of our outfit in that second cavern."

"Good idea holding the cave," agreed Tom. "All the advantage on our side in there in the darkness with them in the light outside. But how about Jimmy? She might come back at any moment."

"If she hears the fighting she'll be warned and if she's as sensible as I think her, she'll stay away or approach very cautiously," Dr. Hewlett replied. "Besides," he added, "there's the rear entrance to the cave so she could join us without being seen by the rascals."

"Here they come," exclaimed Tom. "We'll soon know what's on their minds this time."

A crowd of nearly twenty ruffians had appeared at the end of the pathway and were advancing confidently across the clearing towards the camp, and the three men who instantly recognised two of the members of the

former party, together with their leader who now, however, kept close to his companions.

As a whole, they were an even more villainous appearing lot than the four who had first visited the camp. All were ragged, unkempt and bare-footed. Several were nearly white, others were quadroons and mulattoes, and several were coal-black Negroes. One of the latter was a veritable giant, a gorilla-like monster with a barrel chest, enormously long and powerful arms and a bullet head with a diabolically cruel and bestial face.

"Good Lord, talk about your monsters!" exclaimed Tom as the gang came to a halt and the giant African hunched forward as if about to hurl his black bulk at the defenders of the camp. "That beast is Kong in the flesh."

"Thank heavens few of them have guns," muttered the scientist.

"You bet, and those they've got aren't good for much," added Tom.

"So the Americanos ees expecting us, no?" cried the leader of the raiders, still keeping well back from the front ranks of his men. "Mebbe thees time eet is not me, myself, what ees the joke, eh. Mebbe thees time eet ees the other feet that ees in the boot, yes. Thees time I am ready. *Si señor.*"

"And this time I again order you off the cay," Dr. Hewlett replied. "Don't you know you and your men are on United States territory? See that flag——" He pointed to the flag flying above the tent.

The fellow shrugged his shoulders and sneered contemptuously. "*Si*, me, I myself see heem," he replied. "But me, I spit on that flag, yes. Mebbe the Americanos have take thees cay, mebbe no, *quien sabe?* But——"

"If I should pay you the hundred dollars you demanded

how do I know you'll leave?" demanded the scientist, interrupting the leader's words.

"The hundred dollars!" cried the rascal. "*Caramba*, that ees to make the laugh." At his words his comrades roared with hoarse laughter. "The Americano theenk eet ees the peeg I come for, no?" the fellow continued. "The peeg what you keel. *Por dios, no señor*. The peeg ees what you call heem—the camouflagé. The peeg, what ees he? He is not belong to me, no. And one hundred dollars, eet is *nada*, nothing. No, *señor*, it ees not the peeg but the treasure I come for."

"Treasure?" cried Tom. "What the devil are you talking about? We haven't any treasure."

"Excoose me, but you ees one beeg liar, yes," snapped the yellow-faced scoundrel. "Give to me the treasure you find and we go and not come back. But eef you not give eet me, i myself take eet."

"Confound you, we have no treasure," exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "I'll pay you a reasonable sum to be rid of you, but you're crazy to talk about a treasure."

"Mebbe me, myself, not the one who ees *loco*, no," grinned the fellow. "The Americanos dig for the treasure and they find eet. Now I come for eet. You think me one damn fool, no? Mebbe me not see the dirt you have dig. Mebbe me not know the treasure he ees in those chests, no?"

The scientist laughed sarcastically. "You are a fool, and a bigger one than I thought," he snapped. "We've been digging for specimens, for *antique-dades*, Indian relics, not for treasure. Those boxes contain bones and broken pottery and stone implements. You're perfectly welcome to all the treasure you find on the cay. But we haven't found any."

For an instant the rascal looked puzzled, and addressing his comrades he spoke rapidly in Spanish patois in low tones. Then he turned. "*Caramba*, how me know you not tell one *damn* lie?" he demanded. "The treasure mebbe you not find heem. Mebbe you find heem, yes. Eet ees easy to know. We will take look and see eef eet ees treasure in the chests, no."

"Don't you dare touch those cases," cried the scientist. "If you injure those specimens. I'll, I'll——"

"Easy, Doctor," Tom warned him. "Let them look, I'd say. It may save a lot of trouble if it is that mythical treasure they want and think we've found."

"*Caramba*, the *señor* he have the sense, yes," grinned the leader. Summoning several of his men he stepped forward, his gun held ready for use, and in Spanish ordered the men to break open the packing-cases.

Fuming and seething with indignation, Dr. Hewlett stood watching, fully realising that the only wise course was to permit the scoundrels to see for themselves that the cases held only specimens. But as the burly rascals smashed a cover from the first case, and turning it over dumped its contents crashing on to the ground, a berserk rage overcame him. Utterly regardless of all consequences he sprang forward, and seizing an iron bar one of the men had dropped, aimed a terrific blow at the fellow nearest to him. The man went down like a felled ox, but his comrade leaped aside and his machete flashed. At the same instant the leader spat out an oath and cocked his gun. But before he could press the trigger Tom's weapon roared. The gun flew from the leader's hands as the charge of shot struck it, and with a howl of pain the fellow stared dumbly at the blood flowing from his left hand.

"Quick, to the cave!" cried Tom, and covering the scientist's retreat he began back towards the entrance of the cavern with Sam, who had seized the leader's gun, by his side.

Taken completely by surprise at the sudden turn of events, and with their attention concentrated upon their wounded leader, the men made no attempt to prevent the three from reaching the shelter of the cave. But as Tom and Sam ducked within the entrance of the cavern the rascals rushed forwards, shouting and cursing and brandishing their weapons.

"*El cucuo!*" yelled their crippled leader. "*Caramba*, the treasure it is there!" he fairly screamed in Spanish. "Kill them! They are but three!"

But his gang hesitated. They well knew that to rush the cave meant death or serious injuries to some of them, and none of the villains had any desire to be the first to form a target for Tom's gun.

Despite the frantic efforts of their leader to urge them to the attack they refused to advance, but gabbled excitedly in low tones. Then one of their number stepped to the dying camp fire and fanned the embers into flames while others began gathering dry wood and green branches.

"They're going to try to smoke us out," announced Tom as he and the others watched the proceedings from their refuge in the cavern.

"Ah 'spect we bound scootle out the back door, chief," muttered Sam. "Soon's ever the smoke come a-driftin' in we bound to scootle."

"Not on your life!" Tom snapped. "You don't catch me 'scootling' away and leaving those devils to destroy our camp, make off with our things and leave us

marooned. The first to come within range with that fire is going to get a charge of double B's. Is that gun any good, Sam?"

Sam examined the leader's weapon as carefully as the dim light permitted. "No, sir, chief," he replied. "It mash up for fair. You shot bust he too well."

"Here they come!" announced the scientist, as two of the men approached, one carrying a bundle of sticks and leaves, the other a flaming branch of resinous wood.

"Confound them, they've got more sense than I thought," ejaculated Tom. "I can't fire at them without exposing myself, the way they're sneaking along the side of the cliff. But, by glory, I'll make it darned hot for the rest of the bunch to make up for it. I never thought I'd take pleasure in shooting a man but here's where I do."

Raising his gun he aimed at the crowd about their leader and his finger had tightened on the trigger, when from somewhere in the neighbouring jungle came the peculiar report of Gandi's gun. With a wild cry the man with the firebrand staggered back, screaming in agony, blood streaming from his face. Then as his fellow, dropping his load of combustibles, dashed for safety towards the camp and presented a splendid target, Tom fired.

With a yell that might have been heard the length of the cay the rascal leaped high in the air, doubled up, and howling with pain rolled and floundered into the shelter of the stacked packing cases.

"I'll bet he won't sit down for a month," observed Tom grimly. "I wondered when we'd hear from Gandi. Well, here goes for a mass shot. They're panicky already. Look out!"

As he spoke the raiders' guns flashed and shot and bullets

whanged into the rocky ledge about the cavern mouth and sang through the darkness. But Dr. Hewlett and his two companions had ducked back at Tom's warning and were untouched.

"About time Gandi's fizz-boom-bam got in some more work," muttered Tom as he cautiously raised his gun above the protecting edge of rock.

Screams, oaths, curses and shots arose from the raiders' throats as the heavy shot from Tom's weapon found marks in limbs and bodies, and stooping low and forgetting all about treasure, half a dozen of the scoundrels dashed for the path to the landing. But before they could make it the report of Carib's gun again came from the shelter of the woods and with a strange gurgling cry the foremost raider plunged forward and lay motionless.

Panic now seized the remaining rascals. To remain where they were meant being peppered with shot from Tom's gun with no chance of rushing the cave. With the unseen marksman in the forest it was equally impossible to attempt to smoke out the defenders of the cave with its supposed treasure. And to retreat down the pathway meant death or wounds at the hands of Gandi concealed in the jungle. Cowering back of the tents and dunnage, the gang consulted for a few moments.

"Darn them, I can't give them another dose without riddling the tents," Tom complained. "Hallo, where do you suppose he's going?" As Tom spoke, the giant Negro suddenly dashed from behind a tent, and despite the charge of double B's to speed him on his way, he vanished in the jungle on the opposite side of the clearing.

"They're up to some deviltry," declared Dr. Hewlett, "but I can't make out what. I only hope and pray that Jimmy keeps out of their reach. It——"

"There they go!" exclaimed Tom as the remaining men suddenly leaped from their shelters and dashed for the pathway.

As he spoke, he fired both barrels at the retreating bandits, but they were too far distant for fatalities or serious injuries to result, and they merely ran the faster as the shot peppered their backs.

"It's darned funny that Gandhi didn't take another pot-shot at them," declared Tom as the last of the gang disappeared. "Well, it looks as if we're the victors. I wonder if Gandhi killed that rascal he shot. I don't see his body there."

"Beggin' you pardon, chief, Ah see his mates pick he up and carry he off," Sam told him.

"I'm not in the least interested in the matter of his fate," growled Dr. Hewlett. "I'd very gladly have killed them myself when I saw them smashing my specimens. But I am worried about Jimmy, and where on earth is Gandhi. I——"

"There's your answer!" chuckled Tom as the far-away report of the Carib's gun reached them. "Still on duty and harassing the enemy's flank I should say. I hope he got another of the devils."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INDIAN WARFARE

GANDI, "a-spyin'" on the bandits as Sam had expressed it, had seen the fellows land, and keeping to the jungle, his presence unsuspected by the scoundrels, had followed them to the camp, his keen eyes watching their every move. Although always speaking in his "talky-talky" jargon of the Guiana Indians, yet he understood English as well as any one. Moreover, he could understand and speak Spanish, for his tribe lived close to the Venezuelan border, and in addition he had accompanied Dr. Hewlett on a number of expeditions to Central and South America. As he kept within sound as well as sight of the raiders he heard and understood all that was said, and being much nearer to them than were his friends, he caught much of the rascals' talk which Dr. Hewlett and his companions did not overhear. He knew that villainous and desperate as they were, yet they did not plan to resort to extreme measures or violence if such could be avoided, for while the mulatto leader and the gigantic Negro were in favour of an attack and the slaughter of the scientist and his companions, the others were strong against it. It was quite another matter, they argued, to make off with the treasure (which puzzled Gandhi greatly, for he hadn't the least idea what they meant) even if the Americanos refused to deliver it and they were compelled to use force, to the extent of beating up or even wounding the scientist and his friends, in order to secure it.

Gandi, therefore, was in something of a quandary as to what he should do. He could not join his friends without following a long roundabout route to the rear entrance to the caverns, and he felt that long before he reached them hostilities would begin, and that he would be far more useful in his present situation than beside the scientist and the other two. From his vantage point hidden in the jungle he could easily have shot the leader or any one of the raiders, and while he would have had no compunctions about killing one of the rascals, whom he regarded as "all the same pig" as he expressed it, he felt that to do so would merely precipitate a battle and that it was wiser to refrain until matters came to a head. And when the fracas began and Dr. Hewlett struck the first blow, affairs moved so swiftly that before the Carib could make up his mind what to do his friends were within the cave, the leader of the raiders was crippled and another member of the gang lay inert and unconscious under the impact of the scientist's bludgeon. At sight of battle Gandi instantly became transformed from a peaceful, civilised Indian into a savage Carib warrior, cool, calculating and cunning, filled with the lust to kill. No doubt a white man in his place would have blazed away at the enemy, regardless of consequences. But not so the Indian. Fully aware of the limitations of his weapon and that he could not bring down his man at such a distance, he slipped silently through the dense growth until scarcely thirty yards from the nearest of the raiders. Raising his gun he took careful aim at the leader and was on the point of pressing the trigger when he saw the man gathering tinder while another fanned the camp fire into flame, and instantly divining their purpose, concentrated his attention upon them.

He knew that by approaching close to the cliff the two scoundrels could reach the entrance to the cavern without exposing themselves to the defenders' fire. And to do so they must pass within thirty feet of where he crouched. Gandhi smiled. At that range his ancient weapon could be depended upon to kill or maim, and grimly he waited as the unsuspecting fellow with the torch approached.

Not until the rascal neared the base of the cliff and in another instant would have rounded an outcrop of rock did Gandhi fire. As, screaming in agony, the man staggered back, all the attentions of his comrades were concentrated upon him, and Gandhi slipped silently and swiftly from his hiding place. By the time the raiders had recovered from their consternation at being shot at by an unseen foe, the Carib was hurriedly reloading his gun several hundred feet from his former cover.

Before he had finished ramming down the shot the sound of the raiders' fusillade came to his ears, followed by the heavier, muffled report of Tom's gun. The Carib had barely time to press a percussion cap on the nipple of his weapon and wriggle forward within view of the pathway when the first of the fleeing bandits dashed into sight, only to be bowled over like a running rabbit by Gandhi's charge at point-blank range.

Again the Indian withdrew quickly and crouching among the larger trees began recharging his gun. But before it was reloaded the dual reports of Tom's gun roared out, and the next instant the sounds of running feet, shouts, cries and curses from the direction of the trail told Gandhi that the enemy was in full retreat. Hastily ramming in a charge of shot he hurried forward only to see the last of the raiders vanishing around a bend in the

pathway. Turning back, he was about to hurry through the jungle towards the landing in the hopes of getting a final shot at his foes, when he suddenly halted, every sense alert. Only an Indian's ears could have detected the faint sounds which had caused him to freeze, motionless, listening. Then once again he heard them. The scarcely audible sounds of a snapping twig, and of some large body moving through the jungle not far distant. Someone was approaching, some unseen foe, for the sounds were not those made by a wild pig; Jimmy would not be stealing through the jungle so cautiously, and if Dr. Hewlett, Tom or Sam had left the camp to follow the raiders they would have been on the trail, not in the woods. Crouching low, Gandhi waited, peering fixedly in the direction whence the sounds had come, but there was no sign of movement and only the chirping of birds and the shrill notes of an insect broke the silence. Then, suddenly, some body crashed in the bushes behind him and Gandhi wheeled to see a gigantic Negro rushing at him. Naked to the waist, his thick lips drawn back over his gleaming white teeth and with upraised machete gripped in one enormous fist he was a savage, terrifying apparition. There was no time for the surprised Carib to aim and fire his gun, but as if a coiled spring had been released beneath him he leaped to one side as the slashing, murderous blade descended, and dashed off through the jungle. Close at his heels came the huge black. There was no time for the Indian to stop and fire at his foe, no chance even to turn and look back, and with all his faculties concentrated upon the jungle before him he raced on, heading for a section of the cay where the forest gave way to clumps of giant bamboo. Once there he felt that he could outdistance his enemy sufficiently

to afford an opportunity to use his gun, for while he could dodge between them, the iron-hard stalks would resist even the weight and strength of the gopilla-like Negro whose body was far too bulky to pass through them. For a space it was an almost even race, but gradually Gandhi realised by the sounds in his rear that he was gaining. They were now dashing along the edge of a gully or small ravine, its steep sides strewn with masses of weathered rock, and like an inspiration a scheme flashed through the Indian's mind. As he dodged around a thick mass of thorny, tangled vines he leaped suddenly to one side, and down the bank of the gulch. Checking himself, he seized a loose mass of rock, wrenched it free, sent it rolling and bounding down the decline, and turning, threw himself beneath an uprooted tree. It had taken only an instant. Flat on the ground, beneath the sheltering bole and tangled roots of the fallen tree, Gandhi heard his pursuer halt, momentarily at a loss as to the course his quarry had taken. Then, hearing the loosed stone crashing through the thick growth at the bottom of the ravine, the Negro uttered a savage shout and sprang down the slope. The Carib smiled triumphantly. His clever ruse had worked, and as the giant black half-ran and half-slid downwards within a dozen feet of the fallen tree, Gandhi fired. At that distance he could not miss and the charge of shot was as deadly as a soft-nosed bullet from a high-powered rifle. Without a sound the Negro collapsed, his machete fell jangling upon the rocks, and plunging forward, his lifeless body went rolling, crashing to the bottom of the gulch.

Crawling from his hiding place the Indian calmly reloaded his gun, picked up the machete, and without a backward glance at the spot where the slain raider's

body had come to rest, hurried up the slope and started at a dogtrot towards the landing place.

The glint of water and brilliant sunshine between the trees ahead warned Gandi that he was nearing the beach, and moving cautiously he approached the fringe of jungle, got his bearings, and ducking back into the woods hurried onwards until he unerringly reached a spot that commanded a view of the landing and the water beyond. A little more than half-way across the gut the raiders' sloop swung at her moorings, her deck crowded with men, while some fifty yards from the landing place was their small boat with two men resting on their oars, their eyes fixed upon the cay as if awaiting someone. Gandi grinned. They would have a long wait if they were watching for the giant Negro to appear and rejoin his mates. But presently a shout from the sloop caused the men to turn, and apparently obeying a command, they swung the boat and pulled to their vessel. As soon as it was alongside several men leaped into it and the boat was rowed across the gut to the islet where the men disembarked. Back to the sloop came the small boat and once more it made a trip to the islet with a cargo of bandits. But as for the third time it reached the sloop's side, and those still on-board the vessel began to embark, Gandi uttered a low surprised cry and stared, almost unable to believe his eyes, at one of the distant figures. But there could be no question, no doubt about it. The figure, neatly clad in khaki shirt and breeches in sharp contrast to the unkempt, ragged bandits, was Jimmy.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE RAIDERS TAKE A PRISONER

JIMMY HAD found it rather monotonous work keeping watch at the landing. For the first few days of her vigil she had thoroughly enjoyed it, and the hours had passed swiftly. But very soon she had exhausted the fund of entertainment to be found in observing Nature, and after clerical work was completed had little to occupy her mind. And it did seem a rather useless occupation to stay there watching for the reappearance of the rascals whom she felt certain would never return. She would have preferred to spend her time exploring the cay. She had not seen half the little island and at any time the sloop might arrive and they would be sailing away. She wondered what the other side of the cay was like. Perhaps, she thought, there might be other caves even richer in archaeological treasures than those they had discovered.

So, as Sam had said, she was "gone for take a walk," when the sloop with its horde of raiders arrived. Wandering rather aimlessly and following no particular course, but picking her way through the more open woods where there were the fewest impediments to her progress, she had come out upon the summit of a rocky headland on the southern shore of the cay. As her eyes swept the wide expanse of sparkling azure flecked with crinkling white waves, she caught a glimpse of a large sloop entering the channel through the distant mangrove swamp.

"Our sloop's come at last," she thought, a bit regret-

fully, "and I'll have to go back, I suppose. But," she consoled herself, "there's no great hurry. It will be hours before they can break camp and pack and get everything on board. I'll stay right here until the last minute."

Reclining upon the grassy slope he watched the drifting clouds and white-capped waves through half-shut eyes, until, quite unintentionally, her eyes closed and she dropped off to sleep.

With a start she awakened, a bit dazed, and jumped to her feet. Something, some unusual sound, had aroused her, she felt sure, or had she merely dreamed it? In fact, she was not even certain that she had not dreamed of seeing the sloop. Perhaps . . . From somewhere in the distance came the faint sound of a gunshot. Then two more in quick succession. That settled it. The sloop *had* arrived and they were waiting for her, summoning her to hurry back by firing the three shots which had been agreed upon as a signal to recall any of the absent members of the party to the camp.

Waiting only long enough to get her bearings, Jimmy turned and plunged into the woods, taking as nearly a direct course as possible towards the landing place. It was not really far, not more than a mile she felt sure, and in fifteen or twenty minutes she should be there. Then, as she hurried along, she heard the unmistakable sound of Gandi's gun. "Golly, they are getting impatient!" she exclaimed to herself. "What's the rush, I wonder. Aren't they going to wait for lunch? I'm famished."

She had not so far to travel as she had thought and presently the brighter light among the trees before her told her she was nearing the shore, and a moment later she stepped from the jungle to the open area between the landing and the mangroves.

Stifling a terrified cry she stood staring, powerless to move, at the group of wild, piratical-looking men clambering aboard a boat at the landing.

Jimmy's heart seemed actually to cease beating and she felt weak and faint. The raiders had returned. The gunshots she had heard must have been those of a battle. The scoundrels were leaving. Had they killed her uncle and his comrades? All these thoughts flashed through her mind in the fraction of a second, in the brief space of time that she stood there, too amazed and horrified to move. Then, before she could turn and duck back into the jungle, the ruffians saw her.

"*El muchacho!*" shouted one of the gang^{as}, cocking his musket and swinging it to his shoulder, he levelled the weapon at the terrified girl.

Jimmy was sure her last moment had come, but before the fellow could fire the leader sprang forward and knocked the gun-barrel aside.

"*Caramba, no! Take him alive!*" he cried in Spanish.

At his words two of the men rushed for the girl. Filled with panic, Jimmy turned to run, her foot tripped in a vine, she plunged forward on her face, and before she could rise the bandits seized her and jerked her roughly to her feet. Stunned and half dazed by her fall and mad with terror, yet dominating all else was the thought: "They called me *muchacho*. They think I'm a boy. I mustn't scream. I mustn't let them know I'm a girl." And with a supreme effort she managed to control her emotions, her desire to scream, the faintness of abject fear that filled her, and her longing to fight and struggle, for she fully realised that to do so or to swoon would be to reveal her sex.

"*Carrajo, this is good luck!*" exclaimed the leader as

the girl, biting her lip to control herself, was led unresisting to the landing place. "You see, José," he continued, speaking in Spanish and addressing the man who had been on the point of shooting her, "how foolish it would be to kill the *muchacho*. Dead he would be only so much carrion, but alive—*¡mil diablos*, he is as good as the treasure itself."

Then, turning to Jimmy who had understood but a few words of his colloquial jargon, "You not scared, no? You theenk mebbe I keel you? *Caramba*, no. You ees what you call heem in English, the ransom, yes. You weel not be keel—yet, *muchacho*. We weel keep you most safe, yes. You weel write it one letter to you friends like I say and you weel be taken safe back to heem when they give to me the treasure. It ees a good bargain, no?"

Although Jimmy remained silent, fearing to betray herself by her voice, she was vastly relieved. If the ruffians planned to hold her as hostage to be ransomed by the mythical treasure she was safe, for the present, although she shuddered at thought of what might yet be her fate when her uncle, utterly incapable of delivering a treasure which did not exist, failed to comply with the leader's demands. But there was a chance of being rescued. The other sloop might arrive and her captain might be convinced that there was no treasure and might induce the raiders to free her. Or some other vessel might stop at the cay. For that matter the officials at Anona might even send a government launch to the cay when the scientist and his party didn't return on time. And the fact that the bandits thought her a boy was comforting. It was not strange that they should have done so, she realised. She was wearing trousers, her hair was short, she

was tanned, and her face and hands were scratched and dirty from her fall, adding still more to her boyish appearance. For that matter her nickname had been bestowed upon her owing to her boyishness and her low-pitched husky voice. At thought of this she felt ever more relieved, for she could speak with comparative safety.

Such were her thoughts as her captors, still gripping her arms, ordered her into the boat and she was rowed towards the sloop at anchor near the farther shore of the gut. Suddenly as they neared their vessel the rascals ceased rowing, listening intently. From somewhere on the cay the report of a gun reached them, a report which Jimmy instantly recognised as that of Gandi's ancient weapon. And her heart sank at thought of her friends still searching for her, signalling to her, for the leader's statement that he planned to ransom her for the supposed treasure had assured her that her uncle and the others were still alive. Muttering to one another in a clipped patois Spanish incomprehensible to the girl, the men resumed their rowing and were soon alongside the sloop. Half-led and half-pushed, Jimmy was placed in the cubbyhole of a cabin and locked in.

It was insufferably hot and stuffy, and climbing on one of the filthy wooden bunks Jimmy placed her face close to one of the small open ports.

What were the rascals up to she wondered. Instead of getting up anchor and hoisting sail they were rowing towards the islet. Landing on the beach they unloaded a number of sacks and several boxes, and only the two oarsmen returned to the sloop. A second boatload followed the first, and Jimmy, watching them, failed to hear a key grate in the rusty lock, and almost tumbled

backwards in her fright as she turned at sound of a voice and saw the raiders' leader standing in the cabin.

The fellow's lips twisted back in what he intended for a reassuring smile. "Excoose," he muttered, "but eet ees time for the letter to be write."

As he spoke he held out a scrap of greasy paper and a pencil stub, and for the first time Jimmy noticed that his left hand was swathed in blood-stained rags, and she felt a strange thrill of exultation. The rascal had not escaped unscathed from his attack on the camp, that was certain, and she wondered if any other of his band had been wounded or killed.

But the scoundrel was waiting and descending from her perch, Jimmy took the proffered paper and pencil. Then, lowering her voice to its deepest pitch: "What do you want me to write?" she demanded.

The mulatto grinned. "Write that you ees prisoner. Tell heem when he give to me the-treasure he have find I set you free, yes. Tell heem when he ees agree he shoot the gun two time and he wait one lectle and he shoot two time more. That ees the signal, no. Then we make the trade, yes, and all ees well. *Caramba*, yes! he have keel me two mans, mebbe t'ree, but"—shrugging his shoulders—"that ees the war, no? And"—he grinned—"eet is the more treasure for us he do not keel."

Jimmy's heart actually rejoiced as she heard the rascal admit that her uncle and the others had accounted for two, perhaps three of the bandits. But she said nothing, and having added to the leader's words that she was unharmed she handed the hastily scrawled note to the mulatto. She would have liked to say more but she feared the rascal might be able to read and had been most careful to compose the fellow's proposal as if he were writing it.

But as he took it and glanced at it she felt certain by the blank expression on his face that it was meaningless to him.

"*Bueno!*" he exclaimed. "Now we¹ weel see who has the joke on heem, yes."

Stepping to the door he called a command to his men and a moment later two of the fellows entered the cabin and grasping the girl's arms led her on to the deck and lifting her over the sloop's side dropped her into the waiting boat.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE ULTIMATUM

"WELL, THUS endeth that chapter," exclaimed Tom as the last of the raiders retreated down the trail carrying their dead or wounded comrades with them. "How about chasing after the gang and speeding them on their way with number four shot?"

Dr. Hewlett shook his head. "To do so would be to jeopardise our lives," he declared. "Very probably that is exactly what they expected we would do and planned to ambush us. I shouldn't be surprised if their retreat was merely a ruse to draw us into the open."

"All I can say is that if it wasn't the real thing it was a darned good imitation," said Tom. "I wonder what Gandhi fired at. Sounded a good ways off. And where the deuce is he?"

"I'm far more concerned over Jimmy," said the scientist. "She must have heard the shooting, and she should be here by now."

"Gandi's a-comin', chief," announced Sam who had been cautiously peering from the cave.

A moment later the Carib appeared. "Three cheers for the fizz-boom-bam!" exclaimed Tom. "You sure turned the tide of battle, Gandi. Who did you shoot that last time?"

"Me shootum one black feller," replied the Indian. "He plenty try for killum me. Me plenty run. Bimeby me killum all same pig. Me——"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Dr. Hewlett, interrupting the Carib's narrative. "But have you seen Jimmy? She hasn't come back and I'm worried."

"Me seeum," Gandhi replied. "Me's seen Missy Jimmy in boat. Bad fellers gottum. Me——"

"Good Lord!" cried the scientist. "They've captured Jimmy and you stand there telling us what you've done when she's in the power of those damnable beasts! We must do something to rescue her. But what can we do, what can we do? Poor, poor Martha! They've carried her off and we're helpless!"

Tom with tight-shut lips gritted his teeth. "The unspeakable, cursed brutes!" he muttered. "If they——"

"Him feller no makeum sail," the Indian announced, "makeum land other side gut. Me seeum. Plenty feller go. Missy Jimmy go same way like so."

"You mean they've landed on the cay?" cried Tom springing to his feet. "By heavens, we'll teach the skunks a lesson they won't forget."

Gandhi shook his head. "No come this side," he said. "Go topside."

"Ah ispect he tryin' for insinuate they on the little cay yonder, 'cross the gut, chief," Sam hazarded.

Dr. Hewlett, pacing back and forth with bowed head and nearly distraught, halted abruptly in his stride. "Listen! What was that?" he ejaculated.

"Someone calling!" cried Tom as once more the sound of distant shout was heard.

With one accord all leaped to the cavern entrance and peered cautiously forth. No one was in sight, but once again, now louder and nearer, the call came from some unseen person in the direction of the trail.

"It's a man's voice," muttered Dr. Hewlett.

"Who are you? What do you want?" bellowed Tom.

In answer to his shout a man stepped from the pathway into the clearing. In one hand he carried a stick to which a dirty white rag was fastened, and in the other a smaller stick with something white attached to one end.

Keeping his eyes fixed suspiciously upon the entrance to the cave the fellow stooped and planted the smaller stick upright in the earth.

"*Una carta* (a letter)!" he shouted and backing hurriedly away turned and dashed down the pathway as if the devil were at his heels.

"By Jove, it must be a message from Jimmy!" cried the scientist, springing forward.

"Hold on!" Tom warned him, seizing Dr. Hewlett and dragging him back to the shelter of the rocks. "It may be just a trick to draw us into the open where they can rush us."

"But, good Lord, Tom, it must be from Jimmy and important! Someone must get it."

"Ah'll fetch he, chief," volunteered Sam. "Just you lend me you gun, Master Tom, and Ah'll fetch he quick as is."

Stepping from the cave, Sam glanced about and with gun cocked and ready, marched across the clearing, retrieved the stick with the scrap of folded paper held in the split end, and returned unmolested to the cavern.

With trembling fingers Dr. Hewlett unfolded the paper and smoothing it out uttered an ejaculation of relief as he glanced at the hastily scrawled words. "We have caught the boy," he read aloud, "and hold him for ransom. Give us the treasure and we'll return the *muchacho* unharmed. When you are ready to do this fire a gun twice, then wait a few moments and fire two more shots. Then bring the treasure to the landing and we will bring the

boy. Do not bring guns or try tricks if you want to see him alive., P.S. I'm all right so far. Don't worry, yet. Jimmy."

"Thank God she's unharmed!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett fervently.

"And still got her wits about her!" cried Tom. "She's underlined the words 'boy' and 'muchacho.' By glory, that's a comfort—that they think she's a boy, and I'll say she's a smart kid to play up to it. By glory, we'll rescue her somehow."

"How can we?" groaned the scientist. "We haven't any treasure to give the scoundrels. We have nothing—nothing of value to offer other than our equipment and a little more than a hundred dollars in cash."

"They might accept that, if we could only convince them that we haven't any treasure," said Tom. "Maybe if we invited them to send a couple of men, under a flag of truce, to investigate, we could prove their confounded treasure doesn't exist."

"Possibly," admitted Dr. Hewlett, "but I doubt it. They are so firmly convinced that we have found a treasure that they'd probably think we had concealed it and were double-crossing them. And even if they agreed to such terms how can we be sure they'd free Jimmy? In my opinion they'll kill her and try to kill us also. As long as any of us remain alive we're a menace to them."

"I don't doubt they'd like nothing better than to bump us all off," agreed Tom. "But that's not such an all-fired easy job, as they've discovered already. Besides, we can insist that they come unarmed also, and that only one or two men bring Jimmy over. Anyway, it's worth trying. If only that confounded skipper would show up with our sloop it might be our salvation."

"I'm afraid he won't," sighed Dr. Hewlett. "He's several days overdue. I am more convinced than ever that he is hand in glove with these pirates. And how can we communicate with them?"

"But there must be some way," persisted Tom. "We'll have to think up some scheme. There isn't any time limit mentioned and if we keep that yellow-skinned devil waiting he may get impatient and nervous and send another messenger and we can give him a message to carry back."

"Yes, I think that is our only chance," said Dr. Hewlett. "And I'm not going to allow myself to worry over Jimmy just yet. As long as they think she's a boy and that we will ransom her they'll see to it she isn't harmed."

"Beggin' your pardon, chief, Ah 'spect we bound to have trouble yet," declared Sam. "Long as ever they's campin' on the island yonder they got boat and can cross over too easy. They's plenty numerous, chief, and we's only the four of us. Ah 'spect they's complottin' and connivin' to sneak over in the night and kill we. Yaas, sir, that what they aimin' to do and Ah don't goin' sleep easy lon's they's yonder and we's here. No, sir, chief, Ah don't desire for to wake up and find myself dead, no, sir."

Despite the seriousness of their case Tom grinned and a smile flitted across the scientist's face. Still, both realised that there was far more than a grain of sense in the Negro's words and that if the raiders desired to do so a night surprise would be an easy matter.

"You're right, Sam," Tom told him. "We don't any of us want to wake up and find ourselves dead. Even if they didn't manage to slit out throats while we slept

they could get away with our stuff and leave us in a mighty bad fix. I think our best plan is to move everything into this cave and sleep inside. With one man on watch they can't surprise us."

"I think that is our wisest plan," agreed Dr. Hewlett. "At least for the present. But the cave is not an ideal place to defend in case of an attack. They can always smoke us out."

"Not with the back door open," declared Tom.

The other smiled. "And while we made our way out by the rear exit they could help themselves to our possessions," he said. "Besides, we cannot make this cave our headquarters. It is bone dry and water is a necessity. The one which furnishes our water supply is far too wet and damp for occupancy."

"What's the matter with the one next door?" demanded Tom. "That's fairly dry in spots and there's always water dripping from the roof."

"It's the most promising, I admit," replied Dr. Hewlett. "But there isn't enough water to last very long if we should be besieged. However, it will have to serve for our present needs. And it's high time we began moving our equipment into it. It's growing late and if those brigands plan to attack us they're as likely to do so to-night as any time."

"More likely to," growled Tom, as giving order to Sam and Gandi, he and the scientist began moving their possessions into the smaller cave. "They'll figure we're so upset over Jimmy and so darned confident of their honesty that we'll be careless." Then with a laugh, "I've got an idea. Trickery's a game two can play at. We'll leave the tents up and some empty cases scattered about and they'll think we're such dumb fools that we're

still using the camp. Then if we spot them sneaking up to the tents we can pot them."

"An excellent ruse," commented the scientist. "But I don't think we should shoot them. If we should kill or wound them they might avenge themselves upon Jimmy. We're in a truly terrible predicament."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

COUNCIL OF WAR

THE NIGHT passed uneventfully, but there was little sleep for Dr. Hewlett and Tom, for despite their efforts to cease worrying over Jimmy they were filled with dire forebodings and racked their brains, striving to devise some means of rescuing her from the clutches of the raiders on the islet.

But they could think of no plan which seemed feasible, and day dawned to find them wan and haggard. More to occupy their minds than for any other reason they went to the landing and studied the islet through their powerful binoculars, but could see little. Now and then a man was visible, moving about near the shore, and from farther inland faint wisps of smoke rose from the raiders' camp fires. Apparently the entire gang had taken to the land leaving their sloop deserted, for there were no signs of life aboard the vessel.

"This inaction is almost unbearable," said Tom. "I almost wish the devils would come across here and start a scrap. A good lively fight would be a lot better than sitting here doing nothing. It's like a game of chess, waiting to see what the other fellow's next move will be, and I always detested chess."

"I expect they feel much the same," said the scientist. "They're waiting for our next move, but being ignorant, primitive scoundrels, wholly unaccustomed to controlling themselves, they'll unquestionably make the first move."

Moreover, they're in the wrong and realise it. Delay to them is dangerous. At any time some vessel, even a government launch might arrive, and they'd find themselves in a nice fix. Besides, according to Gandhi, they were troubled by our flag. I'll wager they are far more nervous and uneasy than we are."

"I still believe that if we could convince them we haven't found any treasure to deliver we could make a deal with them," Tom declared. "If they're anxious to get going while the going is good they'll jump at the chance of getting clear with a few hundred dollars."

Dr. Hewlett shook his head. "You don't know their type of mongrel," he told Tom. "They're a mixture of white, African and Indian blood and possess some of the mental characteristics of each race. You could no more convince them that there isn't a treasure than you could convince a West Indian Negro that jumbies do not exist. They reason backwards—exactly the reverse of the white man's mental process. Local traditions have it there is buried treasure on the cay and we come here and dig. They cannot imagine any sane person digging or performing any manual labour unless for profit, hence to their minds we must be digging for treasure."

Tom grinned. "I haven't the least doubt that you are perfectly correct in all you say. But just the same, when those skunks smashed open the cases and found nothing but artifacts and old bones their expressions showed plainly that they got an awful jolt and didn't know what to make of it. Of course I don't blame you for getting excited and sailing into them when you saw the specimens being smashed up, but I'll bet that if they'd gone through the cases and found nothing else they'd have been satisfied

they were on the wrong track and would have cleared out."

"There you are mistaken again, I'm sure," insisted the scientist. "Of course they got a jolt as you put it, when they didn't find the expected treasure in the cases. But if they'd gone through the entire lot without finding it they would have been all the more convinced that we had it and had tried to hoodwink them by means of the cases of specimens. Being out-and-out crooks themselves they think every one else crooked. They have no more conception of honesty or decency than they have of archaeology."

"Maybe," agreed Tom, "but we're not getting anywhere by discussing what might or might not have happened or what may or may not happen."

"Quite so," assented Dr. Hewlett. "But you forget that great wars and great political triumphs have been won by out-thinking the other fellows."

"True enough," Tom admitted. "Too darned bad we didn't think far enough ahead to have brought along some good rifles and revolvers. If they'd known we were well armed they'd never have dared to try their game."

"Why not add a machine-gun and a bombing plane to your omitted armament?" Dr. Kewlett inquired dryly. "No sense in regretting what we should have done but failed to do, my boy. What we are to do is of paramount importance now."

"That's easy," Tom retorted bitterly. "The answer is, nothing. Just squat here watchfully waiting, I suppose."

"You really should take a lesson from Gandhi," the scientist told him. "You'd discover that 'watchfully waiting' as you call it is the secret of his success in hunting."

"All right," laughed Tom, "I'm licked. I suppose I'm not blessed with much patience and always crave action."

"I shouldn't be the least surprised if you had action and to spare, yet," Dr. Hewlett told him. "Unless I'm vastly mistaken, patience is not the outstanding characteristic of our foes across the gut. They probably crave action, also. But their idea of action is treachery and stabbing in the back. The more I think of the matter, the more I am convinced that they will attempt to secure the supposed treasure by sneaking over here at night in the hopes of butchering us before we recover from the surprise and confusion of their attack. To my mind their offer to free Jimmy in return for the treasure is nothing more than a subterfuge. That rat-faced leader of theirs is a wily scamp and clever in his crooked way. His first visit demanding payment for the swine as an excuse to look about and size up our armament and our temperaments was a scheme worthy of a better cause. And when Jimmy fell into his hands, although I cannot possibly understand why or how she was so careless as to do so, he instantly saw the possibilities her capture afforded. Quite aside from the fact that he knew, or thought he knew, that we would gladly hand over the non-existent treasure in exchange for her release, he also realised that his offer to ransom her would, or at least should, lull us into a sense of false security as to his band molesting us until the deal is concluded. And he undoubtedly reasoned that in case he did not succeed in surprising us or if we resisted him, he could force us to surrender or at least remain passive by threatening to kill or torture Jimmy."

"Of course all that you say is possible," replied Tom. "But even if I'm not as familiar with the mentalities

of these types as you are, I can't believe any man in his senses would do anything of the sort unless there was something to be gained. And, what the deuce could those skunks gain by such methods? There'd be a damned good chance of some of them being killed or seriously wounded, and they've lost two and probably three men already, besides several too badly hurt to fight. And, as you say, they know or think they know they'll get their filthy paws on a treasure by ransoming Jimmy without risking their hides. I'd say that as long as they hold her and are waiting for our signal we're safe from any attack. It isn't human nature to risk one's life unless there's something to be gained by so doing."

"That's just the point," Dr. Hewlett explained. "There is a great deal to be gained by such treachery—their personal safety. They are not fools by any means. They know that as long as any of us survive we will be a constant menace to their freedom and their lives, for even if they have not attempted to commit murder they have attempted armed robbery and are guilty of kidnapping, both crimes punishable by death under the laws in force here. But if we were all wiped out and our bodies tossed to the sharks there would be no evidence to connect them with our disappearance and nothing to prove they did not find the treasure on some far distant island as they would doubtless swear was the case if questions should be asked."

"Good Lord, I hadn't thought of that," cried Tom. "Isn't there anything we can do? Can't we build a stockade or fortify the place somehow so they can't get at close quarters? If they found we were prepared for their deviltry they might change their plans. Even if they're damnable crooks themselves they must know

that decent men can keep their promises, and if we agreed not to lodge complaints against them they might trust us."

"That might work provided we could give them the treasure, which most unfortunately we cannot," the scientist reminded him. "No, Tom, much as I hate to admit it I can't yet think of any feasible plan to follow, other than to keep them waiting and maintain a constant vigil. There is nothing so terrifying to the primitive mind as uncertainty. Every day, every hour that we can delay and keep them guessing as to why we don't ransom Jimmy, will increase their fears and weaken their morale, and will add to the chances of our sloop or some other vessel turning up. But somehow I don't like the idea of dwelling and sleeping in that cave. It's a *cul-de-sac* and no sensible man wants to be caught in a trap with no means of retreat. And there's insufficient water. It's the dry season and every day less and less water will seep down from above."

"It's our best bet, just the same," said Tom, "and a lot better than staying in the open. And if those brigands think they can surprise us they've got another guess coming. With one of us on watch all the time they haven't a chance. About the only thing that really worries me is Jimmy. Not for fear that she isn't all right now, but fearing what they might do to her if they tried to rush us and didn't succeed, or if they get impatient waiting and try to hurry us up by harming her. Every time I think of her over on that little cay among those dirty unspeakable scoundrels I itch to do wholesale murder."

"You are not alone in your homicidal tendencies," Dr. Hewlett confessed.

"Well, I suppose we've got to eat—starving ourselves

won't help 'her," said Tom as Sam announced the meal was ready. "But," he added as they seated themselves just within the entrance to the cave, "I'll be hanged if I feel hungry. To sit here and eat without that freckle-faced kid being here gets such a darned big lump in my throat that I can hardly swallow."

"Yaas, sir, chief, you speak for true," Sam agreed. "Ah don't have heart for to cook without she roundabout. And Ah 'spect she don't farin' 'too good over younder. She bound subsisticate on salt fish and rice and such manner of cosmetics. But Ah prays the Lord she safe and sound and we hears she a-laughin' and a-jokin' and a-singin' here 'bout right soon."

"I hope you're right, Sam," said Tom. "We'll have to trust in the Lord."

"Amen!" breathed the scientist.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE HOUSE IN THE TREE

NOTHING DISTURBED the occupants of the caves during the night, but on the following morning, when Sam left the cavern to secure fuel, his shout brought the others rushing to the entrance.

"What's the matter?" demanded Dr. Hewlett. "You sounded as if you'd stepped on a snake."

Sam, who was gazing with open mouth and staring eyes across the clearing, half turned his head. "Wa la, chief!" he cried. "They been here. They been here in the night and we ain't detectionate they comin' or they goin'. Look, see, chief, it identiculately the same like the other." As he spoke he pointed a gnarled black finger at a slender stick upright in the earth near the deserted tent, a stick with a tiny square of paper in a cleft at its tip.

"I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Tom. "Now how in heck did that get here?"

"Good Lord, those scoundrels must have been here and left it!" cried Dr. Hewlett. "Yet I cannot understand how. One of us was constantly on watch."

"Someone fell down on his job," growled Tom. "Went to sleep most likely. I was on watch after you and I'll swear no one crossed the open ground during my vigil, and I'm dead certain if that stick had been there I'd have seen it."

"Gandi relieved you," said the scientist, "and nothing would convince me that he dozed off or that even a

mouse could have entered the clearing without his knowledge."

"That narrows it down to Sam, then," declared Tom.

"No, sir, chief," the Negro protested. "Ah was the first on watch last night, chief. Ah rouse up the Doctor when me time was expire, chief."

"So you did!" exclaimed the scientist. "By Jove, that must be it! Those scoundrels sneaked in and left the thing while Sam was calling me or I was rousing you or you stepped inside the cave to summon Gandi."

"Guess that solves the problem," agreed Tom. "But let's see what message they left. Sam, go get that note."

"Excuse me, chief, Ah don't acquire the ambitiousness for to go humbuggin' about yonder," Sam protested. "They's pure corruption, chief, and if they's hidin' roundabout they bound to shoot me too easy. And who goin' cook your curry and other viants likewise, if Ah kill, chief?"

"Huh, me getum," muttered Gandi. Cocking his gun he darted from the cave, scurried to the stick and returned safely.

"That settles the ambush idea," said Tom as Dr. Hewlett unfolded the scrap of paper. "What does it say this time?"

"They are getting impatient," the other read. "They say they are willing to free me for half the treasure." The scientist chuckled. "Clever girl," he observed, "she's written the rest in hog-Latin, listen: "I ontday inkthay ethay ancay eadray, utbay I'm not akingtay anceschay. Aketay imetay. Eepkay emthay aitingway. They'll aketay any onemay ouya offer, in imetay. Utbay eepkay atchway. They're anningplay omesay emeschay. I'm all right. Still a muchacho, so don't worry."

"I'll say she's clever!" exclaimed Tom. "By glory,

Doctor, you sized up those devils' psychology all right. And I was right, too. They'll be glad to take what we offer before long. But I'd like to know what their scheme is."

"So would I," said the scientist, "but there's one thing certain. We cannot risk remaining here. If those scoundrels can sneak in and leave this note they could sneak in and smoke us out or hide among the rocks and snipe us just as easily. We've got to find another refuge."

"Righto, but where and what?" Tom asked. "Any camp would be worse. Another cave wouldn't be any better, and we can't hide out in the jungle. Looks to me as if we'd have to sleep in a tree like birdies."

"By Jove, you've got it!" cried Dr. Hewlett. "That's the solution! Sleep, eat and live in a tree, that's exactly what we can do."

"Have you gone stark staring mad?" demanded Tom. "You forget that many thousands of human beings dwell in trees, Tom," Dr. Hewlett told him. "And I'm not mad, let me assure you. There's no reason why we shouldn't follow their example. If we can find a suitable tree it will be a simple matter to build a shack among the branches. Then we'll be safe from attacks——"

"By glory, that is a good scheme!" Tom exclaimed. "Funny I'd forgotten about tree-dwelling tribes. Let's get busy. The sooner we start the sooner we'll be up in the air. There are plenty of big trees to choose from."

"We may not find it so easy," the scientist reminded him. "A suitable tree is not the only essential. We must have the proper building materials—lianas or tough vines, palm leaves for thatch and some easily-handled building materials."

"Why can't we use a tent?" Tom asked. "Just build a

platform across the branches and set up the tent on it."

"We might do so—if we find a suitable tree within easy distance," Dr. Hewlett agreed. "But the chances are that we'd waste more time searching for a tree with a space between the branches large enough for the tent than we'd consume in building a shack to suit the tree. I'm sorry I haven't had time to explore the cay more thoroughly. There are neither suitable trees nor building materials in this vicinity."

"Gandi's been all over the place. He'll probably know where to find what we need. Better ask him," Tom suggested.

Turning to the Carib, Dr. Hewlett explained the situation and asked if he knew where such trees and other essentials as they required might be found.

"Me sabby," replied the Indian. "Plenty big bamboo, plenty much bijuca (lianas) topside. Plenty big tree like so. Too easy makeum benab (hut) in tree same way, me sabby."

"Fine!" ejaculated the scientist. "Is it near here?"

"Not too far," Gandi assured him. "Him place topside hill."

"All the better," declared Dr. Hewlett. "If we can build our house on a hilltop it will be a great advantage. But first of all we must take care of our things here. I scarcely expect they'll attempt to raid us, if they have a raid in mind, until they have given us time to consider their latest offer, and I doubt if they'd dare attack us during the daytime. Still, we cannot be sure, and for all we know they may have spies in the jungle watching us."

"Looks as if we'd have to split our forces and leave someone on guard here," said Tom.

"We can't do that," declared the scientist. "We have

only the two guns and it would be too risky to leave both here and go into the woods unarmed, and one man with one gun couldn't defend the cave. Moreover, if we're to complete our tree-top dwelling before nightfall we'll all be needed at the work. We'll have to hide our possessions somewhere."

"Why not cache them in the cave?" Tom suggested. "If we put the things in the big cave and cover them with the debris from our digging they'll be safe enough."

"Yes, I suppose they will be," mused the scientist. "But it would require the better part of the day to do that."

"It won't take long to cache the necessities," said Tom. "And if they do raid the place they won't bother with things they can't use. We can leave the specimen cases and a lot of the bulky things piled inside the cave and they'll never guess there's anything else in there."

"I suppose we'll have to do so," sighed Dr. Hewlett, "but I hate to leave our priceless collection to their mercy. They'll probably smash the specimens out of pure vindictiveness when they find no treasure in the cases."

Although their equipment was not very large and their original supply of provisions had been reduced to an inconsiderable remainder, it required several hours to select the necessary things they planned to carry with them, cache the others, and pile the cases of specimens, the tents and other bulky objects in the large cave. But at last it was done, and carrying machetes, axes, saws and other tools, a pick and shovel, a coil of rope, and loaded down with food, cooking utensils and other essentials, they started off with Gandi leading the way.

Toiling up the steep slope they at last reached the summit and throwing down their burdens glanced about.

"We couldn't have had a better spot made to order," declared Dr. Hewlett.

"An abundance of giant bamboos, low bushes easily cleared all about, vines and lianas in the neighbouring jungle and that one big *cedra* tree standing alone."

"I'll say it's ideal," agreed Tom. "It's a natural clearing—there usually is open ground where there are bamboos. I defy any one to climb that tree without a ladder and from up there we can spot any one trying to come within gunshot."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if we could see the gut and the islet from the upper branches of that tree," said the scientist. "If so it will serve as a watchtower and will be a great advantage."

"What I'd like to know is how in the deuce we're going to build a hut up where no one can climb," Tom said.

Dr. Hewlett smiled. "Neither you nor I could climb the tree but just watch Gandi. Then, turning to the Carib: "Must for climbum tree. How can do?" he asked.

The Indian grinned. "Me sabby climbum," he replied.

"If he can he's more of a monkey than I thought," declared Tom.

Sam chuckled. "Ah 'spect Ah can clumb he meself, chief," he announced.

"All right, go ahead," the scientist told him. "With both you and Gandi up there we can work all the faster."

Gandi had stepped into the forest near by and now reappeared with a coil of tough rope-like lianas. Passing a length of the vine around the trunk of the tree he knotted the ends together to form a loop considerably larger than the circumference of the trunk. Then, stooping, he tied the ends of a short length of vine to his ankles. Hobbling forward he lifted the liana loop,

dropped it over his shoulders and adjusted it under his arms, raised it as high as he could reach, pressed the vine between his feet against the trunk, and with a quick motion hatched himself up the tree for nearly two feet.

"Well, I'll be shot!" exclaimed Tom as leaning back against the loop and supporting himself by his feet and their connecting liana, the Carib by some seemingly magic trick again lifted the loop high and once more hatched several feet farther upwards.

Sam snorted. "Hi yi, Ca'ib, Ah bound reach first," he cried. Seizing the coil of rope he knotted one end about a lump of rock, whirled it about his head and sent it hurtling upwards to fall across the lowest limb of the tree. Shaking the rope and paying it out at the same time he lowered the rock within reach. Grasping the double rope in his hands he kicked off his shoes, swung up his big feet and gripping the rope in his toes began to walk upward like a gigantic ape.

Sam was the first to reach the limb, and pulled himself on it. Stopping only long enough to draw up the rope, he coiled it and half crouching ran along the branch as swiftly and nonchalantly as though it were a plank bridge, just as Gandi swung himself on to another of the huge limbs.

"By glory, that was some stunt, or rather stunts," exclaimed Tom. "I don't know which one gets the prize. But how in the dickens are we going to follow them?"

"We'll build a ladder when we're ready to ascend," Dr. Hewlett told him. "But first we must get our building materials up there and a platform built. We'll cut the stuff and they can haul it up. I doubt if we'll be able to get much done on the hut to-day, but we'll rig up a platform where we can spend the night."

In a few minutes the first load of bamboo poles and coils of strong "bush ropes" of various sizes was sent aloft, and Gandi and Sam began building a rough platform between the two main branches of the tree a short distance above the fork of the trunk.

Although they had neither spikes, nails nor other fastenings and their only tools were their machetes, this was a simple matter for the Indian and the Negro. Accustomed from early childhood to dwellings built of materials supplied by Nature and erected without the use of tools other than knives and machetes, Gandi could build a rain-proof cosy *benab* or open-sided hut in a few hours, while Sam, who had spent many years in the jungles, was an expert bushman and was almost as familiar with jungle architecture and building methods as the Carib. Working deftly and rapidly they lashed the strong four- and five-inch bamboos across the branches. Smaller bamboos were placed criss-cross over these and were bound in place by the tough lianas, and presently Sam shouted down that the platform was completed.

"All right," Dr. Hewlett called back. "Haul up the rest of these poles and bush ropes and then you come down and help us with the ladder. Gandi can go ahead with the *benab*. If we get a roof done to-day we'll be all right."

"We'll need two ladders, I think," said the scientist. "I plan to draw the ladder up each evening so no one can reach us, for I'll guarantee none of those brigands can climb this tree, but a single ladder would be too long and unmanageable. If we have one fixed permanently, leading from the crotch to the platform, and the other extending from the crotch to the ground, we can draw the latter up easily."

With an abundant supply of the giant bamboos con-

veniently at hand and with an unlimited supply of the "bush ropes" to be had for the cutting it was neither a difficult nor a long job to construct the two ladders, although, as Tom observed, they were rather shaky affairs, yet they were strong enough to support any three men and were wonderfully light. By the time they were completed Gandhi announced that the roof frame was nearly done and that thatching could begin at any time. Drawing up the shorter ladder he lashed the upper portion to the platform, descended to the crotch, secured the lower end, and came swiftly down the second ladder.

Then for a time all four men were busy gathering palm leaves for the roof of their tree dwelling. At last Gandhi announced that they had enough, and climbing the ladders, he and Sam hauled up the bundles of palm leaves, until the last one had been piled on the platform. Then the packs of supplies and utensils were sent up and with all their possessions safely stored high above earth, Dr. Hewlett and Tom started to ascend the ladder. Half-way to the crotch Tom suddenly halted. "Good Lord," he exclaimed, "we must be consummate asses. We've forgotten the most important thing of all. We haven't any water!"

"By Jove, you're right," said the scientist. "I wonder if there is any water near here. It would be a serious matter if we have to depend upon what we can bring from the camp site."

In answer to Dr. Hewlett's query, Gandhi ceased his work at thatching and peered about, scrutinising the forest. "Me findum," he announced presently. "Me secum balli trees bottom side hill. Plenty water where findum balli trees, me sabby."

"Three cheers for our aborigine," laughed Tom. "Who's to be the water boy?"

"I think we'll have to act as ~~water~~ carriers at present," replied the scientist. "We can't tharch a palm-deaf roof, but we can tote water. Pass me down a bucket and your biggest kettle, Sani."

Tom laughed. "Do you know," he said as they commenced to descend the ladder, "that strikes me as one of the funniest things yet—packing a water pail over here and forgetting we hadn't any water."

"It might not have been so ludicrous if there hadn't been water near," said Dr. Hewlett as they set off in the direction of the balli trees Gandi had seen. "If those scoundrels had landed and had taken possession of our old camp we'd have been in a nice fix and completely at their mercy."

"Yes, but that big little word 'if' comes in, there," Tom reminded him. "Anyway, here's the reservoir."

"Comes from some cave, no doubt," commented the scientist as they filled their receptacles with the clear cool water issuing from a crevice in a ledge of rock. "I expect the island is honeycombed with caverns and subterranean passageways, and underground streams."

Short as was the distance, the two men breathed sighs of relief when at last they reached the open space beneath the big cedra tree. Very little of the water was wasted in hoisting the vessels to the platform. Then, with a final glance about, the two men climbed wearily to the crotch, drew up the lower ladder and secured it and ascended to the platform where the gaunt skeleton of the hut with its partly thatched roof rose amid the litter of palm leaves, bamboo poles and dunnage.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SPECULATIONS

"TOO BAD we can't see the gut from here as I had hoped," Dr. Hewlett remarked. "Our elevation isn't as great as I thought."

"Probably could see it from the top of the tree," said Tom. "Maybe one of our monkey-men might climb aloft and have a look after we get settled."

Presently the last layer of palm leaves was lashed to the bamboo roof frame and the thatching was completed.

Sam, who had been rummaging among the cooking utensils and provisions, peered over the edge of the platform. "Ah, 'spect Ah bound go down below for to cook," he observed. "If Ah make fire here it bound for conflagrate and bamboozle we, yaas, sir."

"Of course you'll have to do your cooking on the ground," Dr. Hewlett told him. "We might build a clay hearth up here, but even then the danger would be too great. A single spark might cause disaster. Bamboo, even when green, will burn like tinder, and the palm thatch will be dry and inflammable in a couple of days. But you'll be perfectly safe down there, Sam. No one can approach without being seen from here."

"Ah ain't take into consideration that matter," declared Sam. "But how we goin' arrange the manner of consumin' whatsoever Ah cook, chief? Is you and Master Tom plannin' to decendulate and consummate you meals below or is we bound h'ist the cosmetics up here-about, chief?"

Tom laughed. "I'd say we'd better 'decendulate' in order to partake of our 'cosmetics,'" he said.

"Quite so," agreed the scientist. "While we dine, Gandi can remain on watch here, and if those bandits should put in an appearance we could climb to the platform before they could reach the foot of the tree."

"They might snipe us from the shelter of the bamboos," said Tom.

"They'd never reach the bamboos without being spotted by Gandi," declared Dr. Hewlett confidently. "He'd see or hear a lizard moving among them."

Tom stretched himself out on the platform and gazed upwards through the interlaced foliage overhead. "No fear of having our throats cut while we sleep up here," he remarked. "But I suppose we'll have to keep watch just the same."

"I don't feel that is necessary," Dr. Hewlett replied. "Any one trying to climb this tree would make enough noise to awaken us, even if they emulated Sam's feat. And I plan to cut off that lowest branch. Not that I fear they might attempt to reach us that way, but because it obstructs the view of the ground on that side."

"I'm not worrying over any of those vermin climbing up here," said Tom. "I was merely thinking that in case they should sneak up they might shoot up through the platform on the chance of hitting some of us."

"I don't imagine there is the least danger of that," declared the scientist. "The chance of a random shot finding its mark would be very small, and a fusillade from us would be fatal to any one directly beneath us. No, I feel we will be perfectly safe here with the ladder drawn up."

"I wonder what they'll think if they raid our old camp and find we've vanished," mused Tom.

"Probably assume that we've taken to the woods," said Dr. Hewlett.

"I'll bet they'd never imagine we'd taken to the tree-tops," grinned Tom. "But seriously, how the deuce can Jimmy communicate with us if they don't know where we are?"

"I've been asking myself that same question," replied the other. "I'm inclined to think that we should leave a note at the camp telling them to leave any message there in the usual way. The only trouble is that we'd be compelled to visit the place each day to learn if they had left a note. And to do so would be to risk being ambushed. Yet it is highly important that there should be some means of communication."

"If they find out we're here they could leave their messages at the edge of the jungle," said Tom. "If one of them appeared with a flag of truce he'd know we wouldn't shoot him on sight."

"Hmm, perhaps that would be the safest way, and I have no doubt they'll soon learn where we are," replied Dr. Hewlett. "Although they're villainous scoundrels, some of them at least are unquestionably skilled bushmen and it would be a simple matter for them to locate us. We'll have to give this further consideration. It's too late to do anything to-day, anyway."

"Except to eat," said Tom. "Sam's calling us, and I'm famished."

Nothing disturbed them at their meal, and having dined, the two men ascended the ladders to their lofty refuge and kept watch while Gandi and Sam ate. By the time they had finished and the dishes and utensils had been

washed and drawn up to the platform the sun was low in the west, and the giant bamboos with their feathery tops cast long black shadows across the open space on the hilltop. Climbing to the platform, Sam and Gandi drew up the lower ladder and secured it in place.

"Like lifting the drawbridge of an old medieval castle," Tom remarked. "All we need is a moat. But I'll bet we'll sleep more comfortably than the old knights. Even if these bamboos are about as comfortable as corrugated iron they're preferable to being 'pillowed on bucklers cold and hard.'" Then with a chuckle as he lit his pipe and leaned back against a branch of the tree, "I was just thinking how handy a suit of armour would be," he said. "If those gangsters should see a man in full armour appear they'd drop dead with fright. If we could only rig up a ghost or a devil or an apparition of some sort we might get them so jittery they'd free Jimmy and clear out. I'll bet they'd fall for it, too. Who ever heard of a self-respecting treasure without a ghost or a jumbie to guard it? And if they believe there's a treasure here a spook would seem perfectly in order. I'm surprised they dared to come near the place at night."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett, "your nonsensical talk has given me an idea. I don't believe there's the least danger of those scoundrels making a night attack. Some of them may have been brave enough to have sneaked over with the message while we were there in the cave. But I don't believe they could overcome their fear of spirits sufficiently to enter the jungle at night, especially after one of their number has been killed here. They'd be in mortal terror of meeting his ghost."

Tom yawned. "I'd hate to meet him myself," he

muttered. "But it would take more than a ghost to keep me awake. I'm turning in."

Nothing disturbed their slumbers, and despite their strange quarters the two white men slept soundly until awakened by a rattling of dishes as Sam made preparations to descend and cook breakfast.

"Whew!" exclaimed Tom, stretching himself. "I'll bet I've grooves in my flesh that'll last the rest of my life. I've heard of a hen on a hot griddle, but I feel as if I'd slept on a cold grid. I never dreamed that bamboos were so hard."

"I'll admit they're not exactly a 'Beauty Rest' or 'Ostermoor' mattress," said Dr. Hewlett. "But we'll sleep more comfortably hereafter. There's no space to sling our hammocks here, but we can use our camp cots. I plan to send Gandi down to leave a message at the cave and I'll have him bring back our cots. We can complete the house to-day and then we'll be quite snug and secure."

"You speak as if you expect to be here for some time," said Tom. "I thought this house in a tree business was just a temporary arrangement until we can get Jimmy back and be rid of those cut-throats on the islet."

The scientist smiled. "Quite so," he agreed, "but when will that be? It's a waiting game. Matters are at a deadlock at present with both sides entrenched and resting on their arms as you might say. It—"

"I won't say it," Tom interrupted, "my side's resting on darned hard bamboos."

"As I was about to state," Dr. Hewlett continued, "it may be some time before the raiders are willing to accept whatever terms we offer. In fact, I'm rather inclined to think that they'll stick to their demands until their provisions run low. I wish I knew how much

food they brought with them. I assume, however, that they did not plan to remain here and are not well supplied."

"They can catch fish and shoot game," said Tom. "I'll bet they won't be ready to dicker until they've searched every square inch of the caves and dug over every foot of the camp site looking for that imaginary treasure. And meanwhile they'll hold Jimmy. Hang it all, it makes me so darned hot to think of her being over there with that bunch of fiends that it seems as if I'd go crazy whenever I allow myself to think of it."

Dr. Hewlett nodded. "I know that, Tom," he said, "and I feel it as keenly, perhaps more keenly than you do. But I am sure she is in no real danger. Her safety is their one hope. I don't doubt they'll search for their supposed treasure, but they won't dig for it. As they came here feeling certain we had found a treasure, and fully expecting to steal it from us, they would not have provided themselves with tools for digging. I doubt if they even search the caves thoroughly. They'll assume that we have concealed it elsewhere—in the jungle or in some secret cavern, and when they find we have taken picks and shovels with us they'll feel positive we have buried it somewhere. But come, Sam's been calling us to breakfast for the past ten minutes."

"Ah 'spect. Ah bound beg you pardon for the meagreness of you breakfus', chief," said Sam apologetically as he served the two men. "But takin' the facts of the case into consideration Ah bound econonolise. Yaas, sir, look like we bound to be here some time, chief, and we food gettin' lesser and lesser all time."

"Don't think we need worry over that," declared Tom. "We can always catch fish and shoot pigeons or wild pigs,

not to mention conchs and iguanas. I guess there's no danger of our starving. And by the same token I can't see any chance of those devils on the islet being starved out either."

"That type of men won't stand for such fare unless driven to it," declared Dr. Hewlett. "They demand their rice, beans and salt fish—and rum."

"You speak for true, chief," chuckled Sam. "They stupid niggers and bound have they rum and they provisions like you say. Seems like they so full up with corruption they bound for absorbulate rum to keep theyselves from decomposin'. Yaas, sir, Ah 'spect the buzzards what 'assimulate the nigger what Gandhi shoot bound for be well drunk theyselves, chief."

Tom roared with laughter. "That's a good one, Sam!" he cried. "When you tell a story you sure tell a good one. By glory, it's too bad we didn't have a barrel of rum we could have left at the cave. Then they'd have drunk themselves unconscious and we could have rescued Jimmy and sailed away, leaving them marooned."

"I'm afraid that scheme wouldn't have worked, even if we had the liquor," said the scientist. "Rum to them is a ration, not an intoxicant. They rarely become drunk and they are far more quarrelsome and dangerous when deprived of their rum than when supplied with it. That's one thing I'm counting on—that they'll get out of hand and refuse to listen to their leader and will demand that he accept anything we offer when their liquor is exhausted. They can buy a lot of rum for a hundred dollars. And the lower their rum gets the bigger a dollar will look to them."

"I can see that," said Tom, "but if they get quarrelling and ugly as sin Jimmy'll be in all the more danger."

"Not 'when she's their only medium of exchange," declared Dr. Hewlett. "They'd be downright crazy to do anything that would jeopardise their own interests and would result in their going home with empty pockets as well as empty stomachs. I'm not worrying over her safety for the present. Beside's Gandhi may find a message when he goes to the old camp with my communication."

But when a short time later, Gandhi returned, he reported that he had found no message at the abandoned camp site and that there were no traces of the raiders having visited the spot as none of the cases in the cave had been disturbed. He also informed them that he had been to the landing place and that the sloop was still anchored in the gut with no signs of any one on board, and that the small boat was drawn on to the shore of the islet.

"How about letting Gandhi get some game and a palm cabbage?" Tom suggested. "It's a good chance now we know none of the rascals are snooping about. We can go ahead with the house with Sam's help."

"An excellent idea," agreed Dr. Hewlett.

"Beggin' you pardon, chief," said Sam, "he ain't obligate to get the cabbage. There's plenty round about. Ah can secure aforesaid easy as is. All Ah bound for do is clumb a tree and cut he, 'chief.'"

"So we have cabbages right in our own back yard and didn't know it," laughed Tom.

Sam grinned and vanished among the trees below the brow of the hill to reappear a few minutes later with a yard-long ivory-like palm bud balanced on his kinky head.

Presently as the three were busily at work on the tree house they heard the report of Gandhi's gun and soon

afterwards the Carib emerged from the woods carrying a half-grown pig.

"Pork and cabbage for dinner," Tom observed. "Who'd ask better fare? I only wish Jimmy were here to help us eat it. I'll bet the poor kid isn't dining any too well over on the islet."

During the rest of the day the four worked steadily at their hut and by late afternoon had it fully completed. The four sides had been walled with bamboo poles and palm-leaf thatch, with a doorway in the end opposite the ladder and a good-sized window at the other end, thus avoiding, as Dr. Hewlett explained, any danger of someone stepping from the doorway at night and falling through the opening in the platform railing where the top of the upper ladder was secured. Within the hut, the bamboo floor had been covered with sheets of the soft cloth-like sheaths of palm buds which served as a mat or carpet. Sam had shown his ingenuity and skill as a bushman by hewing stools and seats from the soft cork-like balsa wood, and with the camp cots installed, the house in the treetop was a cosy dwelling.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GANDI DISAPPEARS

"GOLLY, THAT'S what I call a good night's rest!" declared Tom as he awoke the next morning to find the others up and about.

"So the insects didn't disturb your sleep after all," said Dr. Hewlett.

"Insects disturb me!" exclaimed Tom. "Say, I'll bet a tarantula could have done a tap dance on my nose and I wouldn't have known it. What's on the programme for to-day?"

"Breakfast first of all," replied the other. "Sam's becoming impatient. You know how a good chef feels about the food getting cold."

"I guess you were right about the sloop of ours not coming for us," remarked Tom, as they ate. "It's five or six days overdue now, isn't it? I'd like to wring that black skipper's neck for leaving us in the lurch this way. He's really responsible for all our troubles. If he'd showed up on time we'd be safe back in Anona and Jimmy with us by now. How long do you suppose it will be before someone remembers we're here and a rescue boat starts out?"

"I'm no prophet," Dr. Hewlett replied. "It all depends upon circumstances. If I knew why our sloop failed to arrive I could tell better. If she started out and came to grief it might be weeks before any action was taken, but on the other hand, if something prevented the skipper

from sailing, and he had the sense to report it, they might send a launch or some other craft right away. But you know how these people are—they never hurry, and as they know we won't suffer for food here they wouldn't see any necessity for rushing to our rescue."

"Do you still feel that there's any connection between these raiders and our sloop's skipper?" Tom asked.

"In a way, yes," declared the scientist. "But to what extent is merely surmise. There are plenty of other reasons why he may have failed us. Quite possibly he was hired for a trip to some other port, expecting to be back in time to come here, and was delayed by weather or other causes. But here comes Gandi. I wonder if he found any message this morning."

The Indian, however, reported that there were no indications that any one had visited the abandoned camp, and that the raiders' boat was still drawn up on the shore of the islet with their sloop anchored as before.

"That leaves matters *in status quo*," observed Tom. "It begins to look as if they were waiting for us to make the first move. But how in the deuce are we going to kill time? I don't suppose we could risk going back and digging in the cave, there's no sense in me going hunting, and if we went fishing it would be just our luck to have those devils take it into their heads to stage a raid while we were away from here."

Dr. Hewlett laughed. "Why don't you turn entomologist and devote your time to studying the insect life of the cay?" he suggested. "I can make excellent use of my time going over my notes and putting them in order."

Tom snorted. "I'm no bugologist," he declared. "As far as I'm concerned all insects are divided into two kinds—those that are pests and those that are not. My

only interest in bugs is to leave the harmless kinds alone and to hope the others will leave me alone."

Dr. Hewlett sighed. "I'm afraid you'll never be a really great scientist," he declared with mock regret. "To be a truly great scientist one must have some knowledge of all branches of science, you know."

Tom grinned. "Are you fishing for a compliment?" he asked. "You've pretty well defined your own status. Nobody questions the fact that you're a great scientist, but I've no desire to be more than an archaeologist. Maybe bugs and birds and plants are just as interesting as old bones and ruins and artifacts, but archaeology has got all the other ologies licked in one way. You can think up all sorts of theories and suppositions to explain things and the old chaps who made and used them can't bob up and tell the world you're all wrong. Even if other archaeologists don't agree with you they can't prove you're wrong and they're right—one fellow's guess is just as good as another's."

"Tom, you're hopeless," laughed the other. "But if archaeology is your sole interest I suppose we might pass the time hunting for remains about here. There may be caves in the ridge by the spring."

More to keep minds and bodies busy than with expectations of making any discoveries, the two men spent the better part of the day searching about the ridge, but without result.

"Well, that's that," Tom remarked as he threw himself down and idly watched Sam at his culinary duties. "Anyhow we had a nice tramp even if we didn't find anything."

Dr. Hewlett chuckled. "That remark reminds me of the old Yankee whaleman's statement," he said. "Returning

from a three years' voyage, he was asked if he had good luck. 'Wall,' he replied, 'we had a danged nice sail but we didn't get no ile.'" •

Sam shook with laughter. "Ah apprecutate that joke, chief," he chuckled. "Yaas, sir, Ah certainly does."

"Well, we'll 'apprecutate' something to eat," Tom told him. "Hurry up with that grub, Sam."

As they finished the meal, Dr. Hewlett glanced about. "Where's Gandhi?" he asked.

"He's gone for cotch fish, chief," Sam told him. "Likewise he stipulate he take a look for to see if those stoopid niggers 'cross the gat is humbuggin' about."

"Confound the boy!" exclaimed the scientist. "He has no business going off without permission. Especially while we were absent. I thought he had more sense than to leave the place alone with only Sam here."

Tom grinned. "You can't expect an aborigine to behave like other human beings," he said. "They're creatures of impulses. But Gandhi's no fool. You can bet he wouldn't have gone off until he was sure there was no danger. And a mess of fish would taste darned good."

"Hmm, I don't suppose his 'absence is 'of any real consequence," Dr. Hewlett admitted. "But he'll get a good scolding for not asking my permission just the same. And he should be back by now. It will be dark in half an hour."

But even when the tropic night descended and the big firebeetles flashed and twinkled in the blackness of the surrounding jungle, the Carib had not returned, and Dr. Hewlett became really anxious.

"I can't imagine why he hasn't come back," he declared as he peered intently into the gloom from the house in the tree. "Something must have happened to him."

"It is strange, I admit," said Tom. "But I wouldn't worry over him. He's as much at home in the jungle at night as in the daytime. I can't imagine him meeting with an accident, and if he were in trouble he'd fire his gun as a signal to us. He knows we must be wondering why he doesn't show up. My bet is that he saw something suspicious going on among those bandits and is watching to learn just what they're up to."

"I hadn't thought of that possibility," said Dr. Hewlett. "I shouldn't be surprised if you are right in your surmise. But if he doesn't appear before we turn in someone will have to remain on watch for him and lower the ladder when he does arrive."

"What's the sense in that?" demanded Tom. "Why not leave the ladder down? He'll haul it up, or some of us will wake and can help him haul it up when he comes back. As long as he's away there's no danger of being attacked—he'd know if the rascals landed on the cay and would beat them over here, and if the ladder should be up and he had the scoundrels on his heels we might not have time to lower it for him before they arrived."

"There's a good deal in favour of your argument," said Dr. Hewlett judicially. "I can account for his absence only on the supposition that, as you suggested, he is keeping watch on the raiders' camp, and of course if that is the case we would not be running any risk by leaving the ladder down. However, I shall remain awake and on watch for an hour or two. He certainly will return by then."

"Have it your own way," yawned Tom. "But personally I think you're losing your sleep needlessly. Don't hesitate to wake me if you need me or if anything happens."

A moment later Tom was dead to the world, and lusty snores from the direction of Sam's bunk spoke eloquently of the Negro's heavy slumbers.

For a time Dr. Hewlett remained at his vigil. Seated on his cot by the open window overlooking the ladders he gazed into the night. With his mind filled with thoughts of Jimmy, and groping vainly for some plan to put an end to the dilemma into which she and the others had been hurled by Fate, the scientist was oblivious to his surroundings. But the witchery of the night was weaving its spell, nevertheless. The ever-moving lights of the huge firebeetles, the faint chirping of insects, the caressing breath of the night wind and the sleepy rustle of the foliage had an almost hypnotic effect. Despite his efforts his eyes would close, in vain he fought back his overwhelming drowsiness, his head nodded, and he dropped into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UNDER COVER OF THE NIGHT

WHILE HIS friends had been worrying over his prolonged absence and wondering what had become of him, Gandhi had been fully occupied. Although he had been constantly associated with civilised white men during the greater portion of his life, he still retained many of the traits of his savage ancestors. He was inwardly a Carib, although outwardly civilised, a member of a tribe whose intelligence, super-woodcraft, cunning, bravery and fighting prowess had resulted in their conquest of every tribe with whom they came in contact and had enabled the Caribs to hold their own against the Spanish, French and English for centuries.

Rather taciturn, like all of his race, he rarely expressed his thoughts, and he observed and absorbed a great deal which he had never mentioned to his white companions. When the first party of raiders had appeared he had watched them land and had followed them, unseen and unsuspected, as they approached the camp. But until their hostile intentions were evident he had made no move. Then his sudden appearance on the scene had saved the day. And when the rascals had returned in force his mysterious attack in their rear had been the chief reason for their precipitate retreat.

But despite the part he had played he still felt that he had failed in his duty by not saving Jimmy from falling into the clutches of the bandits, and all his thoughts

since her capture had been concentrated upon rescuing her from her predicament. It seemed a hopeless undertaking, however, for the raider's camp upon the little islet was inaccessible, there was no cover near, and the rascals maintained a strict watch. To Gandhi the narrow gut would have been no obstacle, for like all of his tribe he was almost amphibious, but he realised that even if he reached the island undetected (as he was confident he could) and succeeded in finding and releasing the girl (which was problematical) there was scarcely a chance that they could regain the cay without being seen and overtaken by her captors. He even contemplated constructing some sort of primitive canoe or raft with which to accomplish his purpose, and several times had been on the point of suggesting this to Dr. Hewlett and Tom. He realised, however, that they would never consent to his making the dangerous attempt at rescue by himself, and that if the others accompanied him it would mean failure and disaster for all, and would very probably bring dire reprisals upon Jimmy.

Filled with such thoughts, striving in his primitive mind to evolve some scheme for accomplishing his purpose, and peering from his hiding place at the dull glow of the dying fire marking the raiders' camp across the gut, he did not realise how time had passed or that his friends were worrying over his prolonged absence. Moreover, for the first time he was warned by the savage's strange intuition or sixth sense that trouble was impending, despite the fact that everything seemed quiet and peaceful with no unwonted signs of activity in the bandits' camp. Now and then he could see one of the scoundrels walk between him and the dying fire. Faintly, at intervals, he could even hear the sounds of their voices

borne to him on the soft night wind. And then suddenly he tensed, every sense keen and alert, for to his super-sensitive ears had come the sounds of oars in rowlocks and the gurgle of water. A boat was moving somewhere. Against the black background of the islet and mangroves the craft was invisible even to his cat-like eyes, but the dark reflections mirrored on the water were broken and disturbed by the boat's wake, and by the ripples Gandhi knew the craft was headed for the landing place.

As silently as a shadow and as invisible, the Indian stole swiftly towards the spot. An instant later the boat's keel grated softly on the shore, there were a few words in hoarse whispers and two men disembarked and, treading cautiously, vanished amid the trees.

What they had in mind the Indian did not know and he was not addicted to speculation. But that they were up to some deviltry he knew and he was on the point of following them when a slight sound warned him that the boat had not been left unguarded. Wriggling like a snake through the grass and weeds, Gandhi approached within a few yards of the craft and placing his head flat on the ground secured a view of the boat silhouetted against the sky. Seated in the bow was a burly figure. The attitude of the fellow, hunched forward with chin resting on hand, told the Indian as plainly as words that the man felt perfectly secure, that he did not dream of danger near, and was merely watching the boat while his comrades were absent. A thrill of exultation filled Gandhi. Here was his opportunity to even scores with the raiders and to compel them to come to terms. If he could capture the man in the boat, hide the craft and maroon the two raiders on the cay, Dr. Hewlett would have a hostage to offset Jimmy, the enemies' forces would be reduced by

three, and the scientist could dictate terms to the raiders. With Gandhi to think was to act. Placing his gun aside, he sought about until his fingers found a lump of rock, and wriggling forward inch by inch he reached the last clump of brush within six feet of the boat. Cautiously he raised himself, crouching with tensed muscles, and leaped. The scarcely audible thud of the blow was the only sound as the Indian's arms swept down and the lump of rock in his fist struck squarely on the side of the bandit's head.

As soundlessly as if he had been a dummy the man collapsed, and swiftly and with deft fingers Gandhi trussed and gagged him with the boat's painter. To push the boat from shore was but the work of a moment, and using an oar for a paddle the elated Carib headed for the mangrove swamp. His first half-formed plan was to hide the craft with the bound and gagged raider within it until he could notify Dr. Hewlett and Tom of his capture and the prisoner could be secured. But as he slipped between the ghostly trunks of the weird trees a new idea came to him. He would hide his captive, work his boat through the devious narrow channels among the trees, approach the enemy's camp from the rear and, if luck favoured, rescue Jimmy and make their escape in the boat. By capturing the craft he had eliminated the greatest hazards of an attempted rescue. The raiders' forces were reduced by the three men on the cay, those remaining would doubtless have their attentions centred on their fellows who had crossed the gut on some nefarious mission and, most important of all, they had no boat in which to give chase once he and the girl had made a getaway and had embarked in the captured craft. All the old ancestral Carib love of daring and adventure surged through Gandhi's veins at

thought of such a coup, and unerringly he guided his craft to a tiny area of dry land in the heart of the swamp, dragged and hauled the groaning but helpless and voiceless man from the boat, dumped him unceremoniously among the Spanish bayonets and cactus, and left him to the tender mercies of sand flies and mosquitoes.

Although the Carib had never navigated the labyrinth of the mangrove trees, his Indian instinct served him as well as a map would have done and with fully as much certainty, and almost as swiftly as though it had been broad daylight he followed the intricate maze of leads and waterways between the trees, guided by the loom of their tops and their reflections on the still water, towards the farther shore of the little islet. Then as he hesitated, peering through the blackness of the night, seeking the most advantageous spot to land, the distant sound of a gunshot reached his ears. The next moment shouts and excited cries came from the bandits' camp. Here was his opportunity, and quickly running the boat ashore in a tiny sheltered cove he hurried silently and invisibly towards the camp.

He had come within sight of the cluster of rude huts and could see the bandits standing about, gazing towards the cay and listening attentively, when suddenly a bright glow reddened the sky and a pillar of flame shot upwards from the hilltop across the gut. With one accord the raiders dashed for the shore, shouting, cursing, cheering, and leaving the camp deserted. What the flames presaged, what had transpired upon the cay Gandi did not know and he wasted no time in guessing. Dashing forward he peered into the first hut, calling in a whisper, "Missy Jimmy! Missy Jimmy!"

There was no sound and he sprang to the next shack.

'What—who? Gandi, it can't be—' came in amazed muffled tones from the dark interior.

The Indian leaped to Jimmy's side. "No makeum talk. Makeum fun!" he whispered. "No gotum tied?"

For answer she leaped to her feet, grasped the Carib's arm, and together they raced from the camp towards the waiting boat.

As they leaped in and Gandi shoved the craft from the shore, Jimmy noticed the lurid glare in the sky for the first time.

"What has happened?" she panted. "What's that light? It looks like a fire. Where are the others? And how on earth did you get here?"

"No sabby him feller fire," the Indian replied as he wielded his oar. "Doctor chief, Tom chief, Sam no come this side. Two, t'ree feller come in boat. Me bashum one feller head. Tieum up plenty. Makeum walk this side for catchum Missy same way."

By now they were well within the shelter of the mangroves, and realising that Gandi's mind was concentrated on navigating the maze, Jimmy forbore to question him further, although consumed with curiosity to learn the whole story of her rescue. Presently as they passed an opening among the trees she caught a glimpse of the raiders' sloop riding to anchor in the gut a few hundred yards distant, and like an inspiration, a plan flashed through her brain.

"Stop!" she commanded the Indian. Then, as the boat was checked. "Let's take their sloop," she suggested. "Then we can all get away from the cay and leave them marooned until the police come for them."

Something very like a chuckle came from Gandi's lips. "Me sabby," he replied. "Catchum him feller sloop all

same catchum boat, him feller stop plenty long time this side. No can makem walk, how can do?" Then, as he turned the boat towards the sloop. "Spose catchum sloop, mebbe him feller catchum back same way. Mebbe him feller swim mebbe makeum balsa, makeum come 'cross gut. Me sabby, mebbe sinkum sloop him feller no catchum."

"But if we sink the sloop we won't be able to get away," Jimmy objected. "If we all go on board they won't dare try to come over and get it back."

"Huh, mebbe Missy sabby plenty," assented the Carib. "Alla right, me catchum sloop."

A few minutes later they were alongside the craft. Gandi quickly cut the anchor line and made it fast to the small boat, and with Jimmy at the oars and with the Indian paddling they headed for the cay. Only a faint glow now showed above the trees ahead, and while both Gandi and the girl were puzzled, yet as there had been but one gunshot and no further sounds of conflict, and as both were busy with their task of towing the heavy sloop, they gave the matter little thought. Fortunately the tide was with them, it was not far across the gut, and they were within a few hundred feet of the shore when suddenly the tow line came taut with a snap, the small boat jerked backwards, and despite every effort it refused to move forward an inch.

"Me sabby," announced Gandi, laying aside his paddle. "Him feller sloop hitum bottom same time."

"I guess you're right," agreed the girl. "She's hard aground on the sand bar. We'll have to leave her there until high tide. Come on, Gandi, let's hurry and tell the Doctor and Tom and find out what's happened over here."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE HOLOCAUST

DR. HEWLETT awoke with a start. For a brief moment he was not quite certain whether he actually had fallen asleep or had merely closed his eyes. If he had slept, how long had he been unconscious? he wondered. And why hadn't Gadi returned? What on earth had caused the Indian to remain away until this hour, or had he met with some accident or been captured by the raiders?

It didn't seem possible, but what other explanation could . . . Suddenly, he tensed, sniffing the air suspiciously. No, he had not been mistaken, he could distinctly smell the faint pungent odour of smoke. What did it mean? Had Sam carelessly failed to extinguish the camp fire? Thrusting his head and shoulders from the window he peered over the edge of the platform into the blackness below, and with difficulty stifled the exclamation of utter amazement that rose to his lips. Clinging to the lower portion of the upper ladder was a man, and crouched in the wide crotch of the tree beside him was a second man, their figures dimly revealed by the faint light of a fire which had been kindled between the forking branches. At the instant Dr. Hewlett saw them the crouching man was piling green leaves over the flickering tongues of flame. Instantly the scientist divined the fellows' purpose, and his first impulse was to awaken his companions, drive off the scoundrels below and extinguish the fire before the smoke forced

them from their tree-top refuge. Although a peaceful man and averse to using violence, yet he was so thoroughly incensed by the treachery and villainy of the raiders that he would gladly have seen Tom empty both barrels of his gun at the scoundrels. For that matter it would be a question of shooting them or being shot, for it was obvious that they would become targets for the bandits' weapons when the flames or smoke forced them from the hut.

Had Dr. Hewlett and the others been sleeping soundly, as the murderous villains undoubtedly assumed would be the case, nothing could have saved the three men, and the scientist mentally gave fervent thanks for having discovered their danger owing to Gandhi's absence.

All this flashed through his mind in the fraction of a second, and he was about to turn and arouse Tom and Sam when to his utter astonishment the men commenced climbing the ladder to the hut. What did it mean? Why had the scoundrels built their fire in the fork of the tree if they planned to reach the hut? What earthly purpose could they have in ascending to the house instead of waiting below and potting the occupants as the smoke drove them, dazed and choking, from their shelter?

Then, suddenly and intuitively, the explanation flashed through Dr. Hewlett's brain. The fellows planned to reach the hut unseen and unsuspected, and either kill or capture the occupants when they rushed out, confused and blinded by the smoke, thus running no risk of their prospective victims shooting at them from above.

Instantly, with this realisation of the rascals' scheme, Dr. Hewlett formed a plan to turn the tables. But there was no time to lose. The men were more than half-way up the ladder, and as he turned to arouse his two com-

panions he thanked Heaven that both Tom and Sam were the type who waken with minds clear and senses alert and without making a protest or outcry.

"Tom!" he whispered, touching the sleeping man. "Tom, wake up! Hist, not a sound!" Then without wasting an instant trying to explain the situation he aroused the Negro and in a few terse whispered words acquainted the two with the facts and outlined his scheme.

Crouching by the window they waited. By now the smoke had become almost unbearable and with the utmost difficulty the three restrained their agonising desires to cough and sneeze, while tears streamed from their eyes.

But their sufferings lasted for only a few moments. Almost within reach of their arms the raiders stepped from the top of the ladder to the narrow platform, and as Dr. Hewlett had surmised they would do, they stole to the rear of the house ready to strike down the occupants as they emerged from the doorway.

Scarcely had they vanished when the scientist and his companions wriggled from the window and hurried down the ladder. Tom was in the lead, Dr. Hewlett came next and Sam was last. As they neared the crotch where the raiders' fire, smothered with green leaves, sent up its column of dense smoke, Sam stopped. Several feet to one side a bundle of dry palm-leaf thatch, discarded when building the hut, was lodged among the branches of the tree. Like a gigantic ape the Negro swung to the limb, seized the thatch, and tossing it on the smouldering fire, regained the ladder and slid to the ground beside the others.

Dr. Hewlett had planned to remove the ladder and give the rascals a taste of their own medicine by forcing them

to endure the tortures of the smoke until they threw down their guns and surrendered. But Sam's act had put an abrupt end to his scheme. The tinder-like thatch had caught fire instantly, and already tongues of flame were licking up the ladder towards the platform and hut above.

To smoke the raiders into submission was one thing, but to incinerate them was quite a different matter, and the scientist groaned and Tom cried out as the two rascals, suddenly aware of the menacing flames, appeared in the ruddy glare, shouting and cursing in terror and panic. The inflammable bamboo ladder was all afire and as impassable as if made of white-hot iron. The platform was burning in a dozen places, and horrified at the plight of their enemies above, the three on the ground stood staring upwards, utterly powerless to aid the doomed bandits.

"It's terrible!" Dr. Hewlett exclaimed. "They— Look out!" His warning came too late. The raiders had caught sight of the men below and despite the blazing hut and the searing flames and scorching heat, one of the rascals raised his gun and fired. Tom staggered back with a sharp exclamation of pain.

"Are you hit, Tom? Are you hurt?" cried the scientist springing to the other's side.

"Just nicked, I guess," Tom assured him. "In my left shoulder. Only a few shot, I guess. I——"

His words were cut short by a cry from Sam as one of the raiders, unable to endure the torture further, leaped from the blazing platform high above.

With his garments afire he came hurtling downward through the branches, leaving a trail of sparks and fragments of glowing cloth behind him, to land with an

ominous thud upon the rocky hilltop. Before the on-lookers could reach the motionless huddled form, a shower of sparks and blazing poles rained down as the ladder burned through, while the seething mass of flames consuming the hut illuminated the surrounding forest with their ruddy light and cast a lurid glow upon the sky.

"A horrible fate," sighed Dr. Hewlett, as, waiting for the glowing embers to cease falling, so they might reach the man who had leaped, they watched the burning hut which formed the funeral pyre of the other raider.

"Not half as terrible as it would have been for us if you hadn't waked in time," Tom reminded him. Then: "How the deuce did you happen to think of that devilish idea of throwing thatch on the fire, Sam?"

Sam scratched his woolly head and grinned sheepishly. "Speakin' for true, chief, Ah don't rightly know," he replied. "Seems like it just pop into me head when Ah passed the pile of palm leaves. And Ah don't have the premediashun of burnin' he to death, chief, and that the truth."

"I don't suppose we can blame you, for your act undoubtedly saved our lives," said Dr. Hewlett. "But we can't allow that injured man to lie there. Come, Sam, we'll have to get him away from there. The blazing wreckage of the hut may come tumbling on top of him at any instant."

"I'll give a hand," Tom volunteered. "My right arm is all right."

"Your wound is of more importance than this fellow," declared the scientist when, a moment later, the unconscious raider had been dragged out of reach of falling embers.

"Thank Heaven, it is not as bad as I feared," he commented as he examined Tom's wounded shoulder. "One shot grazed the flesh and the others barely penetrated below the skin. Lucky for you that rascal's gun wasn't loaded with a heavier charge and that his aim was poor. An inch or two to the right and you would have lost an eye probably. Now hold tight and I'll have those shot out in a moment."

Tom gritted his teeth and winced as Dr. Hewlett pressed the leaden pellets from the wounds.

"I'll let them bleed all they will," said the scientist. "Best to keep them open until we can use antiseptics. Now we'll attend to this poor chap."

"He's very badly injured," he announced as he bent over the unconscious raider. "Both his legs are broken, his skull appears to be fractured and he is terribly burned. We must get him to our old camp or some place where I can care for him properly."

"I guess his number's up, then," said Tom. "About everything we had was in the hut. Even the first-aid kits were there. There may be some surgical supplies and medicines cached in the cave. But how are we going to get him there? If Gandi was here we might manage it, but with my shoulder I'm only half a man."

"I'd give a great deal to know what has become of Gandi," exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "I'm terribly worried about him. Unless he has met with some serious accident or foul play or has been captured by those scoundrels he'd have been here long ago. He couldn't help seeing the fire."

"I don't want to be pessimistic," declared Tom, "but I shouldn't be at all surprised if this bird and his partner eliminated Gandi before they came here. Maybe just

tied him up for safe-keeping. My guess is that while he was spying on some of the gang the others sneaked up and surprised him."

"I fear as much," Dr. Hewlett admitted. "But I haven't allowed myself to believe it. Somehow I can't imagine a Carib letting this type of scoundrel catch him unawares."

"Neither can I," agreed Tom. "But neither can I imagine two of the devils landing and getting here without Gandi seeing them and warning us, unless he was killed or captured."

"We're wasting precious moments in speculating," the scientist reminded him. "Your shoulder needs attention and this fellow is in fearful shape. Sam, can't we rig up some sort of a stretcher out of bamboos and lianas?"

"Ah, 'spect we can, chief," the Negro replied. "But Ah lose me knife and me machete. Has you got a knife, chief?"

"Good Lord, no—only a penknife," Dr. Hewlett told him. "How about you, Tom?"

"This is the only one I have," Tom told them, offering a small pocket knife. "I'm afraid——"

"Hi yi, Ah got he!" exclaimed Sam as he knelt beside the wounded raider. "He bound to do us good, now he done us bad. Yaas, sir, here's perzactly the impediment Ah requires." Sam rose grasping a heavy bush-knife which he had dragged from the sheath attached to the belt of the unconscious raider.

Quickly, the Negro secured several bamboo poles and lengths of tough vines, and with the others' help a crude but strong litter or stretcher was soon made.

By the time this was done the injured man was regain-

ing consciousness and he moaned and groaned pitifully as he was lifted and placed on the improvised stretcher. Then, with Sam at one end and Dr. Hewlett at the other, and with Tom, carrying his gun, in the lead, they started along the dark trail towards the caves and their abandoned camp site.

They had covered nearly half the distance when Tom suddenly halted and with a warning for silence, stood listening. From somewhere ahead and to one side came the sounds of stealthy footsteps.

"More of the gang!" whispered Tom. "Coming to pick our bones at the feast—the cursed Buzzards. Here, Doctor, take the gun, I can't shoot. And let them have both barrels the moment you see them."

CHAPTER TWENTY

SALVAGING THE SLOOP

LOWERING the litter with the wounded man, Dr. Hewlett seized the gun, Sam gripped the wicked-looking bush-knife menacingly, and crouching in the black shadows of the trees the three prepared to tender the approaching raiders a most unpleasant surprise party. An instant later two dim indistinct figures came into view and the scientist raised his weapon, sighting along the barrel at the nearer of the two. "Halt or I'll shoot!" he barked.

"Hi, no makeum shoot!" and a shrill, startled cry was the answer.

"Gandi!" cried the scientist leaping to his feet. "Gandi and——"

"Jimmy, by all that's holy!" shouted Tom springing forward.

"Oh, how you did frighten me!" stammered the girl, still shaking with terror. "I thought you were the bandits."

"And we thought you were some of the gang," Dr. Hewlett told her. "Thank the Lord I didn't shoot without a warning. But what, how——"

"Me catchum," announced the Carib wholly unperturbed.

"Yes, Gandi rescued me," said Jimmy. "And we stole their sloop. And——"

"Stole their sloop!" repeated the scientist in puzzled tones. "For heaven's sake be a little more explicit. I——"

"Tom, you're hurt!" cried the girl. Then, as a moan of agony came from the wounded raider on the stretcher. "Who, what——"

"By Jove, I'd forgotten the poor rascal!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett interrupting her question. "Come, we can talk later. We must get this man to the cave at once."

As they resumed their interrupted way Jimmy related the events of the night as far as she knew them; and Tom told her of the attack on the house in the tree and its tragic ending, while Gandhi acquainted them with what he had accomplished. By the time the party reached the cave all had a fairly clear and connected idea of what had happened.

"I'm not so sure we are safe from the scoundrels, even if they have no boat," declared Dr. Hewlett as he busied himself with the wounded raider while Tom and Jimmy searched frantically among the cached goods for the medicines and surgical supplies. At last the necessary things were found, and ordering Gandhi to remain on guard outside the cave, the scientist devoted himself to patching up the groaning man while Jimmy bathed and bandaged Tom's shoulder.

"I don't think there's one chance in a thousand that the fellow will live," Dr. Hewlett announced when he had done all in his power for his patient. "I've given him a hypodermic of morphine so he won't suffer, but any ordinary human being would have been killed outright by such injuries as he has received."

"I can't help being sorry for him, even if he is a rascal and tried to murder you," declared Jimmy.

"I don't pity him as much as I do the fellow Gandhi left in the mangrove swamp," said Tom. "I'd hate like the devil to be in his place, being eaten alive by mosquitoes

and sand flies, and with those big land crabs crawling over me. And he hasn't even a shot of morphine to help him."

"We'll rescue him as soon as it is daylight," declared Dr. Hewlett. "I imagine he'll be thoroughly chastened and reformed by then. Personally I can't feel much sympathy for any of the scoundrels. They're out-and-out pirates and potential murderers. There are still at least a dozen of them on the islet and they are more desperate than ever. They may make a raft and cross the gut."

"We're safe enough here," said Tom. "We can hold the cave against the whole gang if they come across here. And if worst comes to worst we can retire to the inner cave and barricade the opening behind us."

Dr. Hewlett smiled. "You forget that our food supplies are very low, and if the rascals should find the rear entrance they'd have us nicely bottled up. And there's no water in this cave. We couldn't stand a siege for more than a day or two at the most. If we are to remain here we shall be obliged to move our belongings and this wounded man to the other cave we occupied. And we decided then that it was an insecure refuge."

"I guess you're dead right," Tom assented. "But I don't believe they will try to cross the gut."

"And I cannot see that they have any other course left but to do so," declared the scientist. "They're marooned on the islet and their only hope of getting away is to secure their sloop. If they cross over to salvage her they most certainly will make a final desperate attempt to secure the imaginary treasure, and to their minds the only way to do so is to force us to reveal its supposed hiding place."

"That may be true," agreed Tom, "but our sloop may

show up, or a rescue vessel may arrive, and if we burn their sloop they'll stay marooned."

Dr. Hewlett shook his head. "There isn't a chance of that rascally skipper coming for us. He's long overdue now. Even if by some chance he should arrive he'd undoubtedly insist upon rescuing his fellows on the islet, even if he isn't connected with their deviltry. Blood is thicker than water, you know. As far as the authorities sending a vessel for us is concerned we might wait here for weeks before it arrives."

"Why can't we salvage the sloop and sail away?" Jimmy asked him.

"That is precisely what I plan to do," her uncle informed her. "And the sooner we get at it the better. Sam, go to the landing and see how the tide is. It will be daylight in less than an hour. Then while Gandi goes after the fellow in the swamp we can busy ourselves with the sloop."

"I see only one objection to that," said Tom. "Who's going to sail the craft after we get her off the bar—assuming we succeed in doing so? I'm no sailor and I don't think you are either, Doctor."

"No, I'm sorry to say I know very little about a sailing vessel," Dr. Hewlett admitted. "But it always has appeared a simple matter. I think we can manage somehow."

"I can steer," said Jimmy, "but I don't know anything about sails. Perhaps Sam's a sailor. He said he was cook on a ship or something."

A moment later the Negro appeared and announced that the tide was rising and that the sloop was still aground.

"Do you know how to sail?" Tom asked him.

"Ah most assuredly, does, chief," Sam replied. "Ah is most proficient at that qualification, yaas, sir, chief."

"Splendid!" ejaculated the scientist. "To my mind the most fortunate event of the entire expedition is the fact that we hired Sam. Now to secure the stranded ark and prepare to bid the cay farewell. I'll take a look at the poor devil here, although there's nothing more I can do for him."

Stepping to the side of the injured raider he bent over him. "His troubles are over," he announced as he turned away.

"He's dead!" exclaimed Jimmy in lowered tones.

Dr. Hewlett nodded. "I expected he would be," he said. "We'll have to bury him, but the funeral can wait and the tide won't. Come, there is no time to lose."

Leaving the cave they made their way to the landing and as they came within sight of the gut and the captured sloop Sam gave a shout.

"Wa la, she afloat!" he exclaimed. "Yaas, sir, see how she bobbles. She float free with the tide, chief. If we don't make to catch she right smart she bound drift on the rockstone yander. We bound move lively for true, chief."

"By Jove, yes," agreed the scientist. "We're just in time. Jimmy, you stay there with Gandi. We've got to hurry."

Leaping into the boat the three men shoved off and pulled for the drifting sloop. But by the time they were alongside, the vessel was within a few hundred feet of the islet where the raiders had gathered on the shore ready to swim out and secure their craft. As the small boat reached the sloop and Sam, clambering aboard, secured a rope, and leaping back made the towline fast, a chorus of angry shouts and curses came from the

throats of the baffled scoundrels. Hastily seizing guns they fired at the occupants of the small boat. But the shots spattered harmlessly on the water and the bullets from the few old-fashioned muskets of the raiders went wild, one or two thudding into the planking of the sloop while others whistled overhead.

Bending to the oars Sam and the scientist towed the vessel slowly out of range of their enemies' weapons and after half an hour of strenuous labour moored her safely by the landing place on the cay.

"Whew! That was a hard pull," panted Dr. Hewlett as he dropped his oars and mopped the streaming perspiration from his face. "And a close shave. Five minutes later and the sloop would have been in their hands, not ours."

"It makes me sick, having this darned shoulder of mine so stiff and lame," declared Tom. "Just sore enough to prevent my doing my share of work."

"Thank heaven it isn't worse," the scientist said. "But you might go along with Gandi and rescue the fellow he left in the swamp. He'll need help to get the rascal into the rowboat, and I think you can manage that."

"Can't I do anything?" Jimmy asked. "I'm not entirely useless. I thought of stealing the sloop, you know."

As the vessel swung to her moorings and her stern came into view, Tom uttered an ejaculation of surprise and stared at her broad counter.

"Good Lord, it's our sloop!" he cried, pointing to the name painted in crudely-formed letters on the vessel's stern.

"By Jove, so it is—the *Gaviota*!" exclaimed the scientist. "No wonder she didn't show up for us."

"But I can't believe that her captain really joined the

raiders," Jimmy declared. "And I'm sure he was not among them while I was their prisoner."

"He may not have taken an active part in the raid even if he connived with the others and let them use his sloop," said Dr. Hewlett. "For that matter they may have stolen the vessel and sailed off with it, or they may have seized her and killed the skipper. They are not the type to stop at piracy or murder. The fact that on their first visit they had another smaller craft makes me inclined to think they did turn pirates to secure this vessel."

"Perhaps it's another *Gaviota*," Jimmy suggested. "There might be two sloops with the same name."

"Yes, but not both belonging in Anona," said Dr. Hewlett. "I'm quite sure it is the same vessel in which we came here."

"Yaas, sir, chief," declared Sam, "she the indentifical sloop and no mistakin' about that. Ah well familiarise with she and Ah knows she broken boom and how it fished with she topmas' spranged just the same like they was."

"Sam's a sailor and he ought to know," said Tom. "But we'll soon settle the matter. I'd recognise the kennel of a cabin if I saw it on a boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. I'll go aboard and have a look."

"It's the same sloop," he announced when he rejoined the others. "And I think you're right about those scoundrels turning pirates, Doctor. There are a lot of bloodstains on deck and a bullet hole in the cabin window."

"We'll probably never know what happened, unless some of the villains confess when apprehended," said Dr. Hewlett. "But we're mighty lucky to have the sloop. Otherwise we'd be marooned here indefinitely."

"Yes, I can see your point there," agreed Tom. "There

wouldn't even be the chance of the government sending a boat for us. Knowing the *Gaviota* had sailed for the cay they'd assume we had all been lost at sea or had changed our plans and gone elsewhere when we didn't return to Anona."

"Exactly," said the scientist. "Precisely as I pointed out might happen when we discussed the matter. It was merely the logical deduction."

"But you were entirely wrong," Jimmy insisted. "You said the *Gaviota* would never show up and here she is. And your logical deductions were a complete washout, for you didn't deduce that we'd be sailing away in the same boat that brought us here."

The scientist laughed. "No use arguing with a woman," he observed. "But we haven't sailed yet and the sooner we do the better. You wanted to help so you can stay here and watch the sloop while Tom and Gandi go after the fellow in the swamp and Sam and I start bringing our belongings down here. Take Tom's gun and if those scoundrels on the islet make a move to cross over, or if anything happens, just fire the gun to warn us."

A number of trips had been made between the cave and the landing place, and most of the important things had been transferred, when Tom and the Carib reappeared.

"Where's your prisoner?" cried Jimmy as the boat grated on the shore and she peered into it.

Tom shook his head. "Ask Gandi," he replied.

"You mean you didn't find him?" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett.

"We found what was left of him," Tom told them. "The land crabs and buzzards had been pretty busy. It wasn't a nice sight."

"What a perfectly hideous fate—to be left to die that

way!" cried the girl in horrified tones. "What unspeakable torture he must have endured!"

"He didn't suffer, and he didn't die, that way," Tom informed her. "I guess Gandi isn't an expert at black-jacking. He bashed in that rascal's head as if it had been an eggshell. I didn't relish the job, but I wanted to make certain what killed him. So I held an inquest. He never knew what hit him."

"Huh, all same me no killum, mebbe him killum odder feller, me sabby," observed the Carib.

"Undoubtedly true," was the scientist's comment. "And," he added, "in all probability he would have ended his life on the gallows or by a knife between his ribs if Fate hadn't overtaken him here. At all events the incident is closed and it solves the problem of having to take him with us or release him here. Now to get our possessions on board the sloop. Then we'll enter the body and leave. I want to get clear of the cay before sundown if possible."

Aside from the cases of specimens there was little to be carried from the cavern cache to the sloop, and by noon-day the last of the boxes had been placed safely aboard.

"I don't think we can complain," remarked Tom as the final case was stowed away and they ate their lunch in the shelter of the trees. "Seems to me," he continued, "the expedition has been eminently successful. We are all well and whole, with the exception of my shoulder which doesn't amount to a row of pins; our specimens exceed all our expectations, and our enemies have provided us with the means of leaving the cay."

"And what an adventure we've had!" cried Jimmy. "Who'd ever dream of such things happening on a peaceful, uninhabited little cay in the West Indies?"

"It may be uninhabited, but I'll be hanged if it's peaceful," laughed Tom.

"Personally I would gladly forgo the adventures," declared the scientist. "Adventures invariably interfere with serious studies. But"—and his eyes twinkled mischievously—"I admit having obtained quite a 'kick' out of it, even if those confounded pirates did interrupt our work."

"I wonder how they'll feel when they see us sail away," mused the girl.

"A good deal like the 'fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,' I expect," said Tom. "I doubt, however, if they have a bottle of rum remaining, and I fancy it will be the police and the Law rather than 'drink and the devil,' that will 'do for the rest.'"

"I'll bet they'll think we are going off with their mythical treasure," laughed the girl. "How surprised they would be if they could see what our chests really contain."

Dr. Hewlett rose. "We still have one more duty to perform," he reminded the others. "Gandi, Sam, bring shovels and picks. We must dig a grave for that dead bandit."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY

"I WONDER where we shall bury the fellow," said Dr. Hewlett, glancing about the deserted camp site. "It would be a terrific undertaking to dig a grave here. There are only a few inches of soil covering the solid rock."

"The only place I know where it isn't all rock is that meadow where the bull chased me," declared Tom. "Although," he added, "I suppose there is plenty of deep earth in the woods."

"The meadow is too far away—and the cattle might object to our presence," said the scientist. "And the soil in the woods is so filled with roots that it would be almost as hard digging as in rocky ground. I think we'll have to carry the body to the beach and bury it above high water mark."

"Wa la, chief, he pure corruption when he alive, and he no better dead," exclaimed Sam. "Takin' the facts of the case in consideration Ah 'spect the most simplest manner of the indisposition of he scorpis electus bound to be droppin' he into the sea, chief."

"Unuoubtedly your solution of the problem would be the simplest," Dr. Hewlett admitted. "Provided," he continued, "the sea were a trifle more accessible. But to carry the body across the island to the windward side would entail more time and labour than to dig a grave. and to cast it into the gut is out of the question."

"I have an idea," cried Jimmy. "Why not bury him in the cave? It is easy digging in there and you already have dug quite a deep hole."

"Hmm, that's not a bad suggestion," mused Dr. Hewlett, "yet I rather dislike burying such a scoundrel in the midst of the remains of the former occupants and among valuable artifacts. Someone at some future time, might wish to continue excavations here."

"If they do, and disinter his skeleton, they'll have a surprise," said Tom. "They might even think they had made an epochal anthropological discovery."

"Why not bury him in the other cave where the graves are?" the girl suggested.

"Good heavens, I'd never consider doing that!" declared Dr. Hewlett. "I'm no sentimentalist as you know, and I haven't the least hesitation about disturbing the dead in the cause of science. But it would be rank desecration to place the body of such an infamous scoundrel among those of the ancient denizens of the cay. As Sam so aptly expresses it, he was pure corruption. No, I think on the whole that Jimmy's first idea is the best solution of the problem."

"Then let's get busy at grave digging," said Tom.

As Jimmy had said, it was easy digging in the cave and there was already quite a deep depression where the excavations had been carried on. Nevertheless the work did not progress very rapidly, for every few moments some relic or artifact would be revealed, and labour would cease while the scientist removed the specimens.

"You'd never hold down a job as a sexton," Tom declared when, for perhaps the tenth time, Dr. Hewlett dropped his shovel to secure a piece of pottery. "I flatter myself I'm a pretty ardent archaeologist, but enough is

as good as a feast as the old saying has it. If we're digging a grave let's dig it and get it over with, but if we're excavating for specimens let's move our things back here and start all over again."

The scientist sighed. "I'm afraid I am an incorrigible collector," he said. "You're quite right, Tom. I'll have to restrain my instincts. Unless something exceptional or wholly new is uncovered I won't interfere with our work again."

For a time they worked steadily, although again and again the scientist cast longing eyes at some object disclosed, and sighed resignedly as the next shovelful of debris covered it up.

"Isn't this deep enough?" Tom asked at last. "We're down at least four feet. What's the use in going deeper?"

"Hmm, I think this will do," agreed Dr. Hewlett. "Well . . . By Jove, if I'm not mistaken . . ." Dropping to his knees he began scraping away the loose material with his hands, disclosing a smooth yellowish-white convex object.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "It's a human cranium. We must secure these remains, Tom. A burial at this depth must be very ancient. It may cast an entirely new light on the prehistoric inhabitants of the cave. Too bad we haven't a trowel," he continued. "Sam, let me have that knife of yours. Now, Tom, dig carefully and we'll see if we can't remove the skull entire. Then we'll search for the remainder of the skeleton."

Almost as enthusiastic as was Dr. Hewlett over the discovery, Tom knelt beside the scientist and commenced carefully digging away the material surrounding the skull.

"It's marvellously preserved," he said as more and more

of the bone was exposed. "Even better than those we found in the burial cave."

"You'll have to thank me for it," Jimmy reminded them as she peered into the excavation and watched them with intense interest. "If I hadn't thought of digging the grave here you wouldn't have found it."

"Quite so, my girl," agreed Dr. Hewlett. "We'll give you full credit for it in our final report on our discoveries here." Then, as the last of the material fell away and he carefully lifted the cranium from its resting place, "What a splendid specimen!" he exclaimed. "And *what* a find! Tom, my boy, this is a totally different type from the others we obtained. And most remarkable, too, for it appears to be of a far more advanced race. The facial plane, the orbital ridge, the structure of the jaws——"

"Here's the rest of the skeleton!" cried Tom interrupting the scientist's dissertation and removing a shoulder blade from the side of the hole.

"Fine!" exclaimed Dr. Hewlett. "Work carefully and we'll secure the entire skeleton. But——"

"What the deuce—why, here's a metal ornament!" exclaimed Tom. "Now where do you suppose these people secured metal? It seems to be copper."

"Let me see it," said the other. "Bronze, I should say," he announced as he examined the object. Then a strange expression came over his face and he uttered an ejaculation of dumbfounded amazement. "I don't, I cannot understand this," declared he. "Tom, this is a buckle!"

"A buckle!" reiterated the other. "But the Indians didn't use——"

"Look out!" shouted the girl. "The side's caving in!" The men sprang back, narrowly escaping being buried

by the mass of debris undermined by the removal of the skull and bones.

"Whew!" Tom exclaimed as the cloud of dust settled down and they rubbed their eyes. "That was a close call. We should have known better than to disturb that . . . Good heavens, what . . ." He stood staring at a large rectangular object exposed by the cave-in.

"Golly, it's a chest!" cried Jimmy jumping into the hole in her excitement.

"Bless my soul, so it is!" exclaimed the scientist. "Now what on earth does this mean?"

"It's the treasure!" the girl fairly screamed. "I know it is. It's what those raiders thought we were after. And now we have found it!"

"May be a coffin instead," said Tom. "But I'll be hanged if I don't think you're right," he added as they examined their discovery. "It's a wooden chest bound with iron, but of course it may not contain treasure."

"It bound for be treasure," declared Sam who had hastily scrambled from the excavation when the skull had been found. "Yaas, sir, it pirate gold for true. All persons acquaint with the fact the pirates kill a man and bury he with they treasure so he ghost bound for guard it. Yaas, sir, and ain't you find he skeleton alongside the chest?"

"By Jove, that would account for it, the buckle, I mean," declared the scientist.

Tom burst into a roar of laughter. "No wonder that skull was a later, more advanced type!" he said. "Of course the facial angle, the orbital ridge and the rest prove that . . . That's a good one on you, Doctor, mistaking the cranium of a white man for that of a primitive Indian."

Dr. Hewlett snorted. "There is no certainty that it is the skull of a Caucasian," he declared, "although I freely admit it is the cranium of a fairly modern and presumably civilised man, yet he may have been an Indian."

"Oh, do stop bickering over old bones and let's get that chest out and open it," cried the girl.

"That's a lot easier said than done," Tom reminded her. "We can't lift it out you know."

"Why not dig all about it and let it tumble out," she suggested.

"An excellent idea," said Dr. Hewlett. "I imagine that if we remove some of the material beneath it, it will fall quite readily."

"We'll be lucky if the whole side doesn't cave in at the same time," Tom declared. "We'll have to be darned careful."

"We can't afford to take any risks," said Dr. Hewlett. "Sam, bring in two or three of those poles we used about the camp."

"We'll be quite safe by digging with the poles while standing on the surface on the opposite side of the holes," he explained as they climbed from the excavation. "Of course," he continued, "the material may slide in and cover the chest as it falls, but we can easily remove that. Do you know, I'm almost as greatly interested in this discovery as though it were truly archaeological."

Tom chuckled. "That bears out my contention that the greatest charm of archaeology is its uncertainty—the fact that one never knows what one may find next," he declared.

"I'd rather find treasure chests than old bones and broken dishes any day," said the girl. "It's a lot more exciting."

Sam now arrived with the poles, and standing several feet from the verge of the hole the men poked and prodded the hard-packed material beneath the chest. For a time their efforts appeared to make little impression.

"Either the chest was placed on hard bottom or else its weight has solidified the debris," said Tom. "It's almost as hard as rock. I don't believe——"

As he spoke he gave a hard thrust with his pole, a chunk of the clay-like material gave way, and the chest slid with a splintering crash to the bottom of the hole. As the dust cleared away the men and the girl stared, speechless, into the excavation. Scattered about the broken chest were countless dull-yellow discs, utensils and dishes, ornaments and irregular cubes, with here and there gleams of multi-coloured light like red, blue and green fire blazing amidst the mass of precious metal.

"Treasure!" breathed the girl in awed tones. "Gold and gems!"

"By Jove, so it is!" ejaculated Dr. Hewlett.

"Well, I'll be shot!" exclaimed Tom.

Jimmy laughed almost hysterically. "And we thought the raiders were crazy to think we were looking for treasure!" she cried. "Who's crazy now?"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

STRANDED

DR. HEWLETT was the first to recover his composure. "Sam," he said, "run down to the sloop and get one of our buckets and my dunnage bag. Dump my things out, and hurry."

"We might as well begin getting the treasure out of there," said Tom as Sam rushed off on his errand. "I'll scoop it into my coat and pass it up to you."

Leaping into the hole, he spread out his coat and commenced piling the golden vessels and larger pieces of jewellery upon it. "I never would have believed I'd ever be doing this," he declared as he lifted the garment with an effort and passed it up to the scientist.

"I expect to wake up any minute and find it all a dream," said Jimmy as she examined the precious objects which Dr. Hewlett dumped unceremoniously on the floor of the cave. "Oh, aren't some of these things wonderful!"

"Nothing dreamy about the weight of the stuff," grunted Tom as he proceeded to load his coat the second time. "What we need is a derrick."

"Perhaps I should have told Sam to bring a block and tackle," said the scientist. "But I think we can manage with the bucket and Sam's help."

"Here he comes now," the girl announced as the Negro appeared at the entrance to the cave.

Sam's eyes seemed ready to pop from his head as he saw the little heap of gold and gems beside the girl.

"Wa la!" he exclaimed in awed tones. "Ah never speculated there is so much gold in all the world."

"I'll bet you never 'speculated' you'd be handling doubloons by the bucketful," Tom told him as he and Dr. Hewlett raised a pail half filled with coins and Sam, seizing it with his huge hands, lifted it and swung it clear with little apparent effort.

"He isn't, now," the scientist remarked. "That is, he isn't handling doubloons. I am quite aware that theoretically, and according to story and tradition, buried treasure should consist largely of doubloons and pieces of eight. But I haven't seen either among these coins. They appear to be guineas and louis d'or, with some Portuguese moidores."

"I wouldn't know a doubloon if it said 'hallo' to me," Tom declared. "Anyway, what's the difference as long as they're gold? Whew! I never knew a man could get tired lifting gold. There must be a million in this pile."

"Of course there is, silly," cried Jimmy. "And I'll bet these diamonds and rubies and emeralds are worth another million."

Dr. Hewlett laughed. "I can forgive Jimmy for his exaggerated ideas," he said. "But honestly, Tom, I'm surprised at you, a college alumnus with a degree. Don't you realise that a million in gold would weigh nearly two tons? That chest couldn't have held over five hundred pounds at the most."

"Maybe, but my arms feel as if I'd lifted a dozen tons already," panted Tom. "For once in my life I've seen more money than I want. Thank heavens this is the last load. Only the scattered pieces to gather up now."

A few moments later the last of the coins had been secured and the two men climbed from the excavation.

"How shall we get all this gold aboard the sloop?" Tom asked. "It makes me feel tired just to think of lugging it down, a bucket at a time."

"You won't have to," Dr. Hewlett assured him. "I had Sam bring my duffle bag for that purpose."

"It will be a darned hard job, carrying that full of gold," declared Tom.

"Not in the way I have in mind," said the scientist. "It isn't such a big load for four men. Jimmy can relieve Gandi when we're ready. But first we must attend to the burial."

With little difficulty the stretcher bearing the body of the raider was placed in the grave and, the men rapidly filled it in.

"Isn't it strange that instead of robbing us the bandits enriched us," mused the girl. "If it hadn't been for them we would never have found the treasure."

"Yes, Fate plays strange pranks," said Dr. Hewlett. "It is a rather fascinating matter to speculate upon the chain of seemingly trivial circumstances which so frequently lead to a momentous event."

"That's so," assented the girl. "If you hadn't decided to bury this man here you wouldn't have found the skull, and if you hadn't found the skull we wouldn't have discovered the chest, and if the man hadn't died there wouldn't have been a grave, and he wouldn't have died if you hadn't had the house in the tree, and if they hadn't attacked us we wouldn't have built that."

"And if we hadn't come to the cay they wouldn't have attacked us," Tom reminded her. "You might go on backward that way indefinitely, Jimmy. For example, if Doc hadn't been an archaeologist or if you'd married and had a dozen kids and I'd been a small town school-

master we wouldn't have been here. For that matter if there hadn't been pirates or Columbus hadn't discovered America or——"

"Hold on, hold on!" laughed the scientist. "You're both overlooking the most important matter of all. That is the little word 'if.' *If* any one of these various events—with millions of others of which we are ignorant—had not taken place no one can possibly surmise what might have occurred. For example, a person may miss a train and the train may be wrecked. Every one on it may be killed or injured, and the person will say 'if I hadn't missed that train I would have been killed or hurt,' quite overlooking the fact that *if* he had taken that train it might not have been wrecked."

"I see your point," said Jimmy. "If we hadn't found the treasure by digging a grave we might have discovered it in some other way."

"And *if* we don't get started toting it to the sloop we'll never get it aboard," Tom reminded her as he handed Sam his shovel and shook the dust from his garments.

"It seems to me," said Jimmy as they turned away from the grave, "that the strangest thing of all is, that a man who lost his life trying to get the treasure should have been buried with the treasure chest beside him."

"Fate certainly played a practical joke on him," said Tom. "But it's no joke to dig a grave even if there is a treasure at the bottom of it. And it isn't going to be a joke to get the treasure to the sloop, either. I see where we don't set sail to-day if we don't get busy."

"I'm afraid we will be delayed," agreed the scientist. "Jimmy, run down to the sloop and tell Gandi to come here as quickly as possible. The sooner we carry this gold

to the vessel the better. And"—he added—"tell Gandi to bring a coil of light rope."

"While we're waiting we'll transfer the treasure to the duffle bag," he said as the girl hurried away on her errand.

"I'd hate to try to shoulder that now," declared Tom as the last of the gold was placed in the strong canvas bag. "How are we going to get a grip on it?"

"We aren't," Dr. Hewlett replied. "We'll lash it between these poles and with two men to each pole we'll have no trouble."

Using the rope which the Carib brought they secured the heavily-laden bag between the stout hardwood poles and lifting it like a sedan chair started on their way towards the landing place.

"It's funny," observed Tom as they left the cave, "that we should have come here carrying a stretcher holding a dying pirate and should be leaving carrying a stretcher holding a pirates' treasure."

"Ah been speculatin' disregardin' the matter and turnin' it over and roundabout in me mind, chief," Sam informed them. "And Ah reach the ultimite conclusiveness that Ah don't make fraid of ghosts no more. Yaas, sir, that the truth. What good a ghost if he don't do he duty? And that ghost the pirate gent'men left for to protect he treasure don't even open he mouth for to yowl at we, and don't lift he finger to discommodate we from walkin' off with all the gold. No, sir, chief. Ah lose me trust in ghosts and that the truth. They pure corruption, that what they is."

• By the time the men reached the landing place with their precious burden and had stowed it safely aboard the sloop, the sun was low in the west. But there was a light

breeze, the tide was favourable, and with a treasure aboard the little vessel all were more anxious than ever to get safely clear of the cay before nightfall. •

"Get under way as soon as you can, Sam," said Dr. Hewlett. "You're the skipper now. Just tell us what to do and we'll try to be good handy seamen."

Sam grinned. "O. K., chief," he replied. "Soon's ever Ah h'ist the jib we bound get a-goin'. If Mistress Jimmy just holds the tiller and swing he to starbo'd soon's Ah cast off we bound drop down with the tide an' by time we get the mains'l set we bound fetch the mouth of the gut."

Quickly the dingy, patched jib was run up, the moorings were cast off, and as the girl swung the tiller to starboard the sloop payed off, the canvas flapped and filled, and with a gurgle of water along her sides the vessel slipped away from the cay. With Dr. Hewlett and Tom lending a hand the big mainsail was hoisted and Sam, taking the helm, headed the sloop for the narrow entrance to the gut.

"Well, we're off at last! Good-bye, old cay!" cried Jimmy waving her hand towards the rapidly receding shore.

Dr. Hewlett smiled. "I once knew a sea captain whose motto was, 'You're never clear of port until you're out of sight of land.' I'll wait and say farewell to the cay when it drops from sight below the horizon astern."

"You are a pessimist," laughed Tom. "In five minutes more we'll be out of the gut and in the open sea. We——"

There was a grating sound, the sloop lurched and careened and came to a sudden jarring stop.

Sam dropped the tiller, and shouting orders to Gandhi and the others, sprang to the halliards. "Wa la, we aground!" he yelled as the sail came clattering, thrashing down on the run.

"Aground!" cried Dr. Hewlett. "You're a fine sailor. Now we are in a fix."

Sam who had seized a pole and was sounding with it over the sloop's side straightened up. "Ah a good sailor, chief," he remonstrated. "We got plenty water here'bout, chief. Ah don't know what she make to hit but Ah speculate it a old log, chief."

"Can't we push her or tow her off?" asked Tom. "We've got to get clear somehow."

"We can try," said the scientist, "but I doubt if we can do so. She's a heavy boat and she hit hard. Besides, the tide's falling rapidly."

Although all pulled, pushed and strained at the oars until almost exhausted the stranded vessel refused to move an inch and at last they gave up in despair.

"It's too bad," declared Dr. Hewlett. "But accidents will happen and of course Sam couldn't know there was a snag of submerged tree here. But there is no harm done and luckily it's almost low tide. When the tide turns we'll soon be afloat."

"I guess your sea captain friend was right," said Jimmy. "I shouldn't have said good-bye to the cay so soon."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE BATTLE OF BUCCANEER'S CAY

THERE WAS nothing to be done but to make the best of the situation, and as Jimmy observed, it was far pleasanter and more comfortable aboard the sloop than it would have been in the damp cavern on the cay.

"I don't suppose there is any danger," said Dr. Hewlett as the last glow of the setting sun faded from the western sky and darkness shrouded the island and the gut. "Nevertheless," he continued, "I think it advisable to maintain a vigilant watch. Those rascals on the islet have seen us set sail. Unquestionably they watched us and saw us run afoul of whatever we are on. They fully realise that with the sloop once away from the cay they are hopelessly marooned and that as soon as we report their activities a police boat will be sent for them. That was why I was so anxious to get away before nightfall—I feared they might cross the gut and attack us. And while I do not actually believe they will make an effort to recapture the sloop, yet our misfortune in being stranded here affords them their last chance."

"They are desperate enough to try it, I admit," agreed Tom. "But they'll have to swim or build a raft of some sort in order to do so. As they could not have foreseen that we would run aground it isn't likely they were prepared for the eventuality. And they'd have a hard job to build a raft in time to come here before the tide rises and we're afloat. I don't think there's the least

danger, but I agree with you that we should keep someone on guard."

"We bound be on watch, chief," Sam reminded them. "Howsomever we goin' for to know when we float 'less we keep watch? Yaas, sir, Ah'm a proper sailor, chief, and you says Ah'm cap'n. Ah learn a long time ago that all good cap'ns keeps he watch-and-watch and keeps lights burnin'. Yaas, sir."

"You can omit the lights," Dr. Hewlett told him. "No fear of another vessel running into us here, and they'd merely aid those pirates if they should attack us. But I'm glad you understand the need of maintaining a watch. You're a better sailor than I thought, Sam."

"Yaas, sir, thank you kindly, chief," grinned the Negro. "Ah 'spect you and Master Tom and Mistress Jimmy better cotch some sleep. You bound for woken when tide makes and we h'ist sail just past midnight. Ah'll be on watch with Gandi and you can rest easy, chief. Ain't any one goin' come humbuggin' round hereabout without we detectin' he presumptuousness, no, sir."

"Right you are," said Tom. "I'm dead tired and I'll bet you others are, too. It's no easy work digging a grave—even if there is treasure at the bottom of it. And this shoulder of mine aches like blazes."

"Oh Tom!" cried Jimmy, "I'd forgotten about your wound. And there you've been working and digging as hard as any one."

"By Jove, yes!" exclaimed the scientist. "You shouldn't have done so, my boy. I must be getting very absent-minded. I, also, forgot your bad shoulder. Why on earth didn't you remind me of it?"

Tom grinned. "To tell the truth I forget all about it myself," he said. "I got tired and sick of hanging about

not doing my share just because of a lame shoulder, and made up my mind to do my bit. Then when we found the skeleton and the treasure chest I was so interested I forgot I had an arm. It's all right, anyway. Just a little sore and lame."

"A good rest will do us all a world of good," declared Dr. Hewlett. "We've been having a mighty strenuous time the past two days and practically no sleep last night. We'd better turn in and get what sleep we can before the tide rises."

Far more weary and sleepy than they themselves realised, for they had been sustained by excitement and nerves, the three fell asleep almost instantly, leaving Sam and the Carib on watch.

Gandi, who never seemed to require sleep, and who had done little hard work during the day, was as wide awake and alert as ever, but Sam soon became drowsy. Yawning prodigiously, he paced back and forth along the deck striving to keep awake. But as the hours passed and only the hoarse cries of night birds in the swamp, the chirp of insects from the shore and the murmur of rippling water alongside the sloop broke the silence of the night, he seated himself upon a coil of rope, leaned back against the furled jib, and telling Gandi to arouse him in fifteen minutes, was instantly asleep.

It seemed to Sam as if he had barely closed his eyes when a touch on his shoulder awakened him. "Me hearum paddle," the Indian whispered. "Some feller makeum come this side."

Instantly the Negro was wide awake, all his faculties on the alert. Stepping silently to the sloop's rail he leaned over, cocked his head on one side and strained

his ears for any suspicious noises issuing from the blackness.

For a moment he heard nothing. Then from somewhere came the sound of a soft splash and the almost inaudible click of wood striking on wood. Hurrying aft, Sam aroused the two white men. "Hist, chief!" he warned them. "Ah hears a paddle. There's boat comin' down the gut."

"It must be those scoundrels!" exclaimed the scientist in a subdued whisper.

"Is your gun loaded, Tom? We'll give them a warm reception. Jimmy, you stay in the cabin. Don't you dare come out."

Crouching behind the rail the four men waited. The sounds of an approaching craft of some sort were plainly audible and now and then the men aboard the sloop caught the tones of lowered voices. But so dark was the night and so deceptive the sounds that it was impossible to be certain whether the invisible men were a hundred yards or a hundred feet distant. Then—"Me seeum!" whispered the Carib, pointing.

The others strained their eyes staring into the inky blackness. For a moment they saw nothing. Then a darker shadow moved across the dark surface of the water barely twenty yards from the sloop.

"It's a raft of some sort, crowded with men," announced Dr. Hewlett in a whisper.

"Shall I shoot?" Tom asked.

"Not yet. Wait for them to make the first move," the scientist replied. "I——"

"Wa la!" ejaculated Sam, in his excitement forgetting to lower his voice. "Look the others alongside. They——" His words were drowned by the report of Gandi's gun,

and in the momentary flash of the discharge the others caught a fleeting glimpse of a rude raft, bearing several men, within a dozen feet of the sloop's stern. Instantly the night was filled with shouts, curses and yells, while howls of pain gave evidence that the Carib's shot had not all been wasted.

"Here they come!" shouted the scientist, leaping up and seizing a boot hook. "Let them have it, Tom!"

Dual flashes stabbed the blackness and two reports thundered like one as Tom fired both barrels at the dim figures madly urging their crude craft towards the sloop. Screams of agony and blistering oaths came from the raiders. Guns flashed and roared. Shot and bullets ripped through the furled canvas and splintered the woodwork all about the defenders of the sloop.

At the first shot Dr. Hewlett had ducked back in the shelter of the bulwarks beside the others, and no one was injured.

"Is any one hurt? Are you all right?" screamed Jimmy from the cabin. "It's terrible to be here not knowing what is happening."

"We're all right," yelled Tom. "Lie flat on the floor and keep quiet. A stray bullet might get you. We—"

Another fusillade from the raiders cut his words short. The report of Gandi's ancient weapon and the roar of Tom's shotgun answered, and the night was hideous with the threats, curses, screams, shouts and groans of the attackers.

"Judging by the racket they make any one would think there are scores of the rascals," growled the scientist as there was a momentary lull in the battle.

"Probably think they'll make us believe there are," muttered Tom. "I'm getting sick of this. I've been using

fives just to pepper 'em and drive 'em off. But I'll see how they like double B's."

The agonised howls that followed the discharge proved that the heavy shot had found more than one mark. There were no answering shots, and the defenders felt that the skirmish was won when Sam uttered a wild yell and leaped aft, brandishing an iron belaying-pin in one hand and his gleaming bush-knife in the other. The others turned to see three men clambering over the sloop's rail, and instantly dashed to Sam's aid. But the Negro was in no need of assistance. With a horrifying thud the heavy iron pin descended on the head of one scoundrel, who collapsed like an empty sack and splashed overboard. The long-bladed knife slashed to right and left, and with howls of pain, as the keen steel ripped through garments and flesh, the other two raiders leaped into the water and vanished in the gloom.

Sam turned, tossed aside his belaying pin and wiped the knife on a coil of line. "They pure corruption, chief," he observed as he sheathed the weapon. "Yaas, sir, they the same specie along with cockroaches and scorpions, and that the truth. Ah 'spect they don't trouble we no more, chief. We see the last of they. The voices is gettin' more'n more fainty."

"Yes, they've cleared out," agreed Dr. Hewlett. "I wonder if any were killed. Bad as they are I somehow dislike the idea of having taken human lives."

"I don't," declared Tom. "I hope the casualties were darned heavy. And there's no question about the fellow Sam hit. Gosh, it sounded like hitting a ripe pumpkin with an axe."

"Can I come out now?" Jimmy called, cautiously

raising her head above the companionway. "The fighting is all over, isn't it?"

"Come ahead," Tom told her. "The war's over and the enemy has ignominiously retreated."

Sam cocked his head on one side. "Beggin' you pardon, chief, does you mind speakin' that word once more?" he asked.

Then, as Tom laughingly repeated it, the Negro chuckled. "Ah sure do like he sound," he declared. "Ah bound find a place for he in me vocabulation, yaas, sir."

"Him feller makeum go cayside," announced Gandhi, who was cleaning and reloading his gun.

"Nearest refuge, of course," remarked the scientist. "Well, they're welcome to it."

"Say what happened to your gun, Gandhi?" exclaimed Tom. "I just happened to think that I didn't hear that fizz-boom-bam. Sounded like a real gun you were shooting."

The Carib hesitated, a somewhat embarrassed expression on his face. "Him feller gun speakum all same odder gun," he replied at last. "Me loadum plenty. Loadum good powder all same you useum. Fizz boom powder plenty good for shootum game. Must for loadum good powder for shootum man."

"Good Lord, he loaded that old gas pipe with my nitrate powder!" cried Tom. "I wondered why the other canister had been opened. It's a miracle it didn't blow him and his gun to smithereens! No wonder it speakum all same odder gun."

"Him feller good gun, me sabby," declared the Indian. "Him no bustum."

"It must be—a good gun, to have stood that," said the

scientist. "But don't you go trying any more tricks. You stick to your own powder, sabby?"

Sam suddenly leaped to his feet. "Hi yi!" he shouted. "We 'float! Whilst we confabulatin' the tide is rise and we driftin'. Hey you, Gandi, catchum hold this rope and makeum h'ist jib. Just grab the tiller, mistress, and keep she steady-like whilst we h'ist sail. We bound to be gettin' under way most ignominiously."

Tom and the scientist roared with laughter as they gave Sam a hand at the halliards. "So you found a place for the word in your vocabulary!" said Tom as the halliards were belayed and Sam took the tiller.

"Fortunately, Sam doesn't always mean exactly what he says," remarked the scientist.

"I'll bet the survivors of those pirates mean exactly what they're saying about us," declared the girl.

Tom chuckled. "What a jolt they'll get if they start digging in the cave and come across their defunct comrade and that empty chest."

"And to think that we actually are sailing off with the treasure!" cried Jimmy. "I can't really believe it yet. Who says archaeology isn't a profitable profession?"

"Wa la!" shouted Sam. "We clear the gut. Yaas, sir, we past the mouth. We in open sea now. Yaas, sir, we homeward bound for true!"

THE END

